

The World's Classics

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**TOLSTOY'S THE COSSACKS
AND OTHER STORIES**

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THE COSSACKS AND OTHER TALES OF THE CAUCASUS

By LEO TOLSTOY

Translated by
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LEO TOLSTOY

Born, Yasnaya Polyana, Tula

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PREFACE

TOLSTOY went to the Caucasus in 1851, when he was twenty-three. He served there as a Cadet for two years, and as soon as he received his commission in an artillery regiment he left the Caucasus to take part in the Crimean War.

This volume contains all his Caucasian stories, except the children's story *A Prisoner in the Caucasus* (which is included in the volume of his *Twenty-Three Tales*) and the posthumous work *Hadji-Murad*. They describe the kind of life he led in the Caucasus, and like all his earlier works they are semi-autobiographical.

The stories belong to Tolstoy's first period, and include some of his earliest works. The dates of their first publication are: *The Raid*, 1853; *The Wood-Felling*, 1855; *Meeting a Moscow Acquaintance*, 1856, and *The Cossacks*, 1863.

The chief story in this book, *The Cossacks*, was the last one Tolstoy published before he wrote his great novels *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. He had begun it years before, but finished it only when urged to do so by a pressing need of money.

Shortly before his marriage he stayed a few days in Moscow on his way from his estate at Yasnaya Polyana (where he had overworked himself at the school he had established for the village children) to Samara, for a rest and *kumys* (fermented mare's milk) cure. Visiting the club one evening he was vexed to see his brother losing money at cards, but soon after he himself was drawn into playing Chinese billiards with a stranger, to whom he lost 1,000 rubles, a sum then equal to about £150. Not

having that amount of money readily available, he bethought himself of the unfinished draft of *The Cossacks*, which he forthwith sold to Kætkov, the editor of an influential monthly magazine, for whom he completed the work. A second part of it, which he had projected, was never written.

Long after his marriage, when he was again away in the province of Samara, a Cossack, on his road to St. Petersburg with a petition to the Emperor, rode to Yasnaya Polyana hoping to see Tolstoy, and brought greetings from the Cossacks who well remembered the Russian Cadet who had lived among them in the early 'fifties'.

Maryana was by that time married to a Cossack, and we do not know whether she even regretted having rejected the greatest of Russia's writers.

As English readers often find Russian names, and especially Russian diminutives and pet names, confusing, we have prefixed to each story a list of the names of the chief characters, marking the syllable on which the accent falls, and giving any variations used in the tale.

In the transliteration of Russian names, we have followed the system worked out by the Liverpool School of Russian Studies, though it differs slightly from the system adopted in our previous works.

The translators' thanks are due to Mr. F. Page for a number of very useful suggestions he made when reading the proofs of this work.

AYLMER MAUDE.

17 May 1916.

THE COSSACKS
A TALE OF THE CAUCASUS IN 1852

LIST OF CHARACTERS IN *THE COSSACKS*

DMÍTRY (MÍTYA) ANDRÉICH OLÉNIN.
IVÁN (VANYÚSHA), his servant.
GRANNY ULÍTA (ULÍTKA), a Cossack woman.
MARYÁNA (MARYÁNKA), her daughter. A Cossack beauty.
LUKÁSHKA (LUKE, 'MARK'), 'The Snatcher.' A young Cossack brave.
ELIAS VASÍLICH, Husband of Ulíta. 'Teacher' in a Cossack regiment.
NAZÁRKA, Lukáshka's friend and comrade.
UNCLE or DADDY ERÓSHKA. An old Cossack, a mighty hunter.
FOMUSHKIN, a Cossack.
ERGUSHÓV, a drunken Cossack.
STÉPKA, Lukáshka's dumb sister.
PRINCE BELÉTSKY, a young officer.
ÚSTENKA, a Cossack girl, Belétsky's favourite.
LAZÚTKA, Maryána's little brother.
GÚRKA, a Cossack.
DUNÁYKA (DÚNKA), a girl.
UNCLE BURLÁK, an old Cossack.

THE COSSACKS

CHAPTER I

Moscow has become quiet. Only very rarely does one hear the sound of wheels in the wintry streets. There are no longer any lights in the windows, and the street-lamps have been extinguished. From the church towers come the sound of bells which, borne over the sleepy city, remind one of morning. The streets are empty. Every now and then a sledge ploughs its way through the mixture of snow and sand and, crossing over to another street corner, the driver stops to wait for another fare. An old woman passes by on her way to the church, where a few irregularly placed wax-candles are already burning with a red light which is reflected from the gilt mountings of the icons. Workmen are already getting up after their long winter night, and are going to their work. But for the gentlefolk it is still evening!

Through chinks beneath the shutters of Chevalier's Restaurant, lights—unlawful at this hour—are still visible. At the entrance stand, closely crowded, a carriage and a number of sledges. Also a three-horsed post-sledge is there. The yard-porter, muffled up and pinched with cold, seems to be hiding behind the corner of the house.

‘And what’s the good of all this jawing?’

thinks the attendant who, with a haggard look on his face, is sitting in the hall. 'This is what always happens when I am on duty !'

From the adjoining brightly illuminated little room are heard the voices of three young men. On the table in the room are the remnants of supper and wine. One, a plain clean thin little man sits looking with kindly, tired eyes at the friend about to depart. Another, a tall man, playing with his watch-key, is lying on a sofa near the table on which stand the empty bottles. The third, in a new sheepskin coat, is pacing up and down. Every now and then he stops to crack an almond between his fingers, which are strong and thick, with carefully cleaned nails. He is constantly smiling at something, and his eyes and face are all aglow. He speaks with warmth, and gesticulates ; but evidently he cannot find the words he wants, and those that come to his lips seem inadequate to express all that fills his heart.

'Now I can speak out,' says the traveller. 'I am not defending myself, but I want you, at least, to understand me as I understand myself, and not to look at the matter superficially. You say I've treated her badly ?' he continues, addressing the man who was looking at him with kindly eyes.

'Yes, you are to blame,' says the latter, and his look seems to express still more kindness and weariness.

'I know why you say that,' continues the traveller. 'You think that to be loved is as great a happiness as to love, and should suffice for a whole lifetime, once you have attained it.'

'Yes, my dear fellow, it is quite sufficient, more

than sufficient,' insists the plain little man, opening and closing his eyes.

'But why should not a man also love?' says the traveller, thoughtfully, looking at his friend as if with pity. 'Why shouldn't one love? Love doesn't come. . . . No, to be beloved is a misfortune! It is a misfortune when it makes you feel guilty because you do not, and cannot, give back what you receive. Ah, my God!' and he waves his arm. 'If only these things happened logically! But it's all topsy-turvy, and doesn't depend on us—it comes as it will. Why, it's as if I had stolen that love! You think so too. Don't deny it, you must think so! But, will you believe it? Of all the stupid and horrid things I have found time to do in my life, this is one I do not and cannot repent of. Neither when it began, nor afterwards, did I consciously deceive myself or her. It seemed to me that I had at last fallen in love; but later on I discovered that I had been unconsciously deceiving myself—that it is impossible to love like that—and I could not go on, and then she went and . . . Is it my fault that I couldn't? What was I to do?'

'Well, anyhow, it's all over now!' says his friend, lighting a cigar to keep awake. 'Only you have never yet loved and do not know what love is!'

The man in the sheepskin was going to speak again, and put his hands to his head, but could not express what he wanted to say.

'Never loved! . . . Yes, quite true, I never have! But after all, I have within me a desire to love, and nothing could be stronger than that desire! But then, again, does such love exist?

There always remains something incomplete. Ah well ! What 's the use of talking ? I 've made an awful mess of life ! But anyhow, it 's all over now ; you are quite right. And I feel that I am beginning a new life.'

' Which you will again make a mess of,' said the man who lay on the sofa playing with his watch-key. But the traveller did not listen to him.

' I am sad, and yet glad to go,' he continued. ' Why I am sad, I don 't know.'

And the traveller went on talking about himself, without noticing that this did not interest the others as much as it did him. A man is never such an egotist as at moments of spiritual ecstasy. At such times it seems to him that there is nothing on earth more splendid and interesting than himself.

' Dmitry Andreich ! The coachman won 't wait any longer ! ' said a young serf, entering the room in a sheepskin coat with a scarf tied round his head. ' The horses have been standing since twelve, and it 's now four o 'clock ! '

Dmitry Andreich looked at his serf, Vanyusha. The scarf round Vanyusha 's head, his felt boots, and sleepy face, seemed to be calling his master to a new life of labour, hardship, and activity.

' True enough ! Good-bye ! ' said he, feeling for the unfastened hook and eye on his coat.

In spite of advice to mollify the coachman by another tip, he put on his cap, and stood in the middle of the room. The friends kissed once, then again, and after a pause, a third time. The man in the sheepskin coat approached the table and emptied a champagne glass, then took the plain little man 's hand and blushed.

‘ Ah well, I will speak out all the same. . . . I must, and will be frank with you, because I am fond of you. . . . Of course you love her—I always thought so—don’t you ? ’

‘ Yes,’ answered his friend, smiling still more gently.

‘ And perhaps . . . ’

‘ Please sir, I have orders to put out the candles,’ said the sleepy attendant, who has been listening to the last part of the conversation and wondering why gentlefolk always talk about one and the same thing. ‘ To whom shall I make out the bill ? To you, sir ? ’ he added, knowing whom to address, and turning to the tall man.

‘ To me,’ replied the tall man. ‘ How much ? ’

‘ Twenty-six rubles.’

The tall man considered for a moment, but said nothing, and put the bill in his pocket.

The other two continued their talk.

‘ Good-bye, you are a capital fellow ! ’ said the short plain man with the mild eyes.

Tears filled the eyes of both. They stepped into the porch.

‘ Oh, by the by,’ said the traveller, turning with a blush to the tall man, ‘ will you settle Chevalier’s bill, and write and let me know ? ’

‘ All right, all right ! ’ said the tall man, pulling on his gloves. ‘ How I envy you ! ’ he added quite unexpectedly when they were out in the porch.

The traveller got into his sledge, wrapped his sheepskin about him, and said : ‘ Well then, come along ! ’ He even moved a little to make room in the sledge for the man who said he envied him ; his voice trembled.

‘Good-bye, Mitya ! I hope that with God’s help you . . .’ said the tall one. But his wish was that the other would go away quickly, and so he could not finish the sentence.

They were silent a moment. Then some one again said, ‘Good-bye,’ and a voice cried, ‘Ready,’ and the coachman touched up the horses.

‘Hy, Elisar !’ one of the friends called out, and the other coachman and the sledge-drivers began moving, clicking their tongues and pulling at the reins. Then the stiffened carriage-wheels rolled squeaking over the frozen snow.

‘A fine fellow, that Olenin !’ said one of the friends. ‘But what an idea, to go to the Caucasus —as a cadet, too ! I wouldn’t do it for a bob. . . . Are you dining at the club to-morrow ?’

‘Yes.’

They separated.

The traveller felt warm, his sheepskin seemed too hot. He sat on the bottom of the sledge and unfastened his coat, and the three shaggy post-horses dragged themselves out of one dark street into another, past houses he had never before seen. It seemed to Olenin that only travellers starting on a long journey went through those streets. All was dark and silent and dull around him, but his soul was full of memories, love, regrets, and a pleasant tearful feeling.

CHAPTER II

‘I’m fond of them, very fond ! . . . First-rate fellows ! . . . Fine !’ he kept repeating, and felt ready to cry. But why he wanted to cry ; who were the first-rate fellows ; whom he was so fond

of—was more than he quite knew. Now and then he looked round at some house and wondered why it was so curiously built; sometimes he began wondering why the postboy and Vanyusha, who were so different from him, sat so near, and together with him were being jerked about and swayed by the tugs the side-horses gave at the frozen traces: and again he repeated: 'First rate . . . very fond!' and once more he even said: 'And it seizes one . . . excellent!' and wondered what made him say it. 'Dear me, am I drunk?' he asked himself. He had had a couple of bottles of wine, but it was not the wine alone that was having this effect on Olenin. He remembered all the words of friendship heartily, bashfully, spontaneously (as he believed) addressed to him on his departure. He remembered the clasp of hands, glances, the moments of silence, and the sound of a voice saying, 'Good-bye, Mitya!' when he was already in the sledge. He remembered his own deliberate frankness. And all this had a touching significance for him. Not only friends and relatives, not only people who had been indifferent to him, but even those who did not like him, seemed to have agreed to become fonder of him, or to forgive him, before his departure, as people do before confession or death.

'Perhaps I shall not return from the Caucasus,' he thought. And he felt that he loved his friends and some one besides. He was sorry for himself. But it was not love for his friends that so stirred and uplifted his heart that he could not repress the meaningless words that seemed to rise of themselves to his lips; nor was it love for a woman (he had never yet been in love) that had brought

on this mood. Love for himself, love full of hope—warm young love for all that was good in his own soul (and at that moment it seemed to him that there was nothing but good in it)—compelled him to weep and to mutter incoherent words.

Olenin was a youth who had never completed his university course, never served anywhere (having only a nominal post in some government office or other), who had squandered half his fortune, and had reached the age of twenty-four without having done anything or even chosen a career. He was what in Moscow society is termed *un jeune homme*.

At the age of eighteen he was free—as only rich young Russians in the 'forties, who had lost their parents at an early age, could be. Neither physical nor moral fetters of any kind existed for him; he could do as he liked, lacking nothing and bound by nothing. Neither relatives, nor fatherland, nor religion, nor wants, existed for him. He believed in nothing and admitted nothing. But although he believed in nothing he was not a morose or blasé young man, nor argumentative, but on the contrary continually let himself be carried away. He had come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as love, yet his heart always overflowed in the presence of any young and attractive woman. He had long been aware that honours and position were nonsense, yet involuntarily he felt pleased when, at a ball, Prince Sergius came up and spoke to him affably. But he yielded to his impulses only in so far as they did not limit his freedom.

As soon as he had yielded to any influence and became conscious of its leading on to labour and

struggle, he instinctively hastened to free himself from the feeling or activity into which he was being drawn, and to regain his freedom. In this way he experimented with society-life, the civil service, farming, music—to which at one time he intended to devote his life—and even with the love of women, in which he did not believe. He meditated on the use to which he should devote that power of youth which is granted to man only once in a lifetime: that force which gives a man the power of making himself, or even—as it seemed to him—of making the universe, into anything he wishes: should it be to art, to science, to love of woman, or to practical activities? It is true that some people are devoid of this impulse, and on entering life at once place their necks under the first yoke that offers itself, and honestly labour under it for the rest of their lives. But Olenin was too strongly conscious of the presence of that all-powerful God of Youth—of that capacity to be entirely transformed into an aspiration or idea—the capacity to wish and to do—to throw oneself headlong into a bottomless abyss without knowing why or wherefore. He bore this consciousness within himself, was proud of it, and, without knowing it, was happy in that consciousness. Up to that time he had loved only himself, and could not help loving himself, for he expected nothing but good of himself, and had not yet had time to be disillusioned. On leaving Moscow he was in that happy state of mind in which a young man, conscious of past mistakes, suddenly says to himself, 'That was not the real thing.' All that had gone before was accidental and unimportant. Till then he had

not really tried to live, but now, with his departure from Moscow, a new life was beginning—a life in which there would be no mistakes, no remorse, and certainly nothing but happiness.

It is always the case on a long journey that, till the first two or three stages have been passed, imagination continues to dwell on the place left behind, but with the first morning on the road it leaps to the end of the journey, and there begins building castles in the air. So it happened to Olenin.

After leaving the town behind, he gazed at the snowy fields, and felt glad to be alone in their midst. Wrapping himself in his fur coat, he lay at the bottom of the sledge, became tranquil, and fell into a doze. The parting with his friends had touched him deeply, and memories of that last winter spent in Moscow and images of the past, mingled with vague thoughts and regrets, rose unbidden in his imagination.

He remembered the friend who had seen him off, and his relations with the girl they had talked about. The girl was rich. ‘How could he love her, knowing that she loved me?’ thought he, and evil suspicions crossed his mind. ‘There is much dishonesty in men, when one comes to reflect.’ Then he was confronted by the question: ‘But really, how is it I have never been in love? Every one tells me that I never have. Can it be that I am a moral monstrosity?’ And he began to recall all his infatuations. He recalled his entry into society, and a friend’s sister with whom he spent several evenings at a table with a lamp on it which lit up her slender fingers busy with needlework, and the lower part of her pretty

delicate face. He recalled their conversations, that dragged on like the game in which one passes on a stick which one keeps alight as long as possible, and the general awkwardness and restraint, and his continual feeling of rebellion at all that conventionality. Some voice had always whispered : ' That 's not it, that 's not it,' and so it had proved. Then he remembered a ball, and the mazurka he danced with the beautiful D—. ' How much in love I was that night, and how happy ! And how hurt and vexed I was next morning, when I woke and felt myself still free ! Why does not love come and bind me hand and foot ? ' thought he. ' No, there is no such thing as love ! That neighbour who used to tell me, as she told Dubrovin and the Marshal, that she loved the stars, was not *it* either.'

And now his farming and work in the country recurred to his mind, and in those recollections also there was nothing to dwell on with pleasure. ' Will they long talk of my departure ? ' came into his head ; but who 'they' were, he did not quite know. Next came a thought that made him wince and mutter incoherently. It was the recollection of M. Cappel, the tailor, and the 678 rubles he still owed him, and he recalled the words in which he had begged him to wait another year, and the look of perplexity and resignation which had appeared on the tailor's face. ' Oh, my God, my God ! ' he repeated, wincing and trying to drive away the intolerable thought. ' All the same, and in spite of everything, she loved me,' thought he of the girl they had talked about at the farewell supper. ' Yes, had I married her I should not now be owing anything, and as

it is I am in debt to Vasilyev.' Then he remembered the last night he had played with Vasilyev at the club (just after leaving her), and he recalled his humiliating requests for another game, and the other's cold refusal. 'A year's economizing, and they will all be paid, and the Devil take them!' . . . But despite this assurance he again began calculating his outstanding debts, their dates, and when he could hope to pay them off. 'And I owe something to Morell as well as to Chevalier,' thought he, recalling the night when he had run up so large a debt. It was at a drinking bout with the gipsies, arranged by some fellows from Petersburg: Sashka B—, an aide-de-camp to the Tsar, Prince D—, and that pompous old —. 'How is it those gentlemen are so self-satisfied?' thought he, 'and by what right do they form a clique, to which they think others must be highly flattered to be admitted? Can it be because they are aides-de-camp? Why, it's awful what fools and scoundrels they consider other people to be! But I showed them that I, on the contrary, at any rate, do not at all want their intimacy. All the same, I fancy Andrew, the steward, would be amazed to know that I am on familiar terms with a man like Sashka B—, a colonel and an aide-de-camp to the Tsar! Yes, and no one drank more than I did that evening, and I taught the gipsies a new song, and every one listened to it. Though I have done many foolish things, all the same I am a very good fellow,' thought he.

Morning found him at the third post-stage. He drank tea, and himself helped Vanyusha to move his bundles and trunks, and sat down

among them, sensible, erect, and precise, knowing where all his belongings were, how much money he had and where it was, where he had put his passport and the post-horse requisition and toll-gate papers ; and it all seemed to him so well arranged that he grew quite cheerful and the long journey before him seemed an extended pleasure-trip.

All that morning and noon he was deep in calculations of how many versts he had travelled, how many remained to the next stage, how many to the next town, to the place where he would dine, to the place where he would drink tea, and to Stavropol, and what fraction of the whole journey was already accomplished. He also calculated how much money he had with him, how much would be left over, how much would pay off all his debts, and what proportion of his income he would spend each month. Towards evening, after tea, he calculated that to Stavropol there still remained seven-elevenths of the whole journey ; that his debts would require seven months' economy and one-eighth of his whole fortune ; and then, tranquillized, he wrapped himself up, lay down in the sledge, and again dozed off. His imagination was now turned to the future : to the Caucasus. All his dreams of the future were mingled with pictures of Amalat-Beks,¹ Circassian women, mountains, precipices, terrible torrents, and dangers. All these things were vague and dim, but the love of fame and the danger of death furnished the interest of that future. Now, with unprecedented courage and a strength that amazed every one, he slew and

¹ Amalet-Bek, a character in a Russian novel of the Caucasus by Marlinsky.

subdued an innumerable host of hillsmen; now he was himself a hillsmen, and with them was maintaining their independence against the Russians. As soon as he pictured anything definite, familiar Moscow figures always appeared on the scene. Sashka B—— fights with the Russians or the hillsmen against him. Even the tailor, Cappel, in some strange way, takes part in the conqueror's triumph. Amid all this he remembered his former humiliations, weaknesses, and mistakes, and the recollection was not disagreeable. It was clear that there among the mountains, waterfalls, fair Circassians, and dangers, such mistakes could not recur. Having once made full confession to himself, there was an end of it all. One other vision, the sweetest of them all, mingled with the young man's every thought of the future —the vision of a woman. And there, among the mountains, she appeared to his imagination as a Circassian slave, a fine figure with a long plait of hair and deep submissive eyes. He pictured a lonely hut in the mountains, and on the threshold *she* stands awaiting him, when, tired and covered with dust, blood, and fame, he returns to her. He is conscious of her kisses, her shoulders, her sweet voice, and her submissiveness. She is enchanting, but uneducated, wild, and rough. In the long winter evenings he begins her education. She is clever and gifted, and quickly acquires all the knowledge essential. Why not? She can quite easily learn foreign languages, read the French masterpieces and understand them: *Notre Dame de Paris*, for instance, is sure to please her. She can also speak French. In a drawing-room she can show more innate dignity than a lady of the

highest society. She can sing, simply, powerfully, and passionately. . . . 'Oh, what nonsense !' said he to himself. But here they reached a post-station, and he had to change into another sledge and give some tips. But his fancy again began searching for the 'nonsense' he had relinquished, and again fair Circassians, glory, and his return to Russia with an appointment as aide-de-camp and a lovely wife, rose before his imagination. 'But there's no such thing as love,' said he to himself. 'Fame is all rubbish. But the 678 rubles ? . . . And the conquered land, that will bring me more wealth than I need for a lifetime ? It will not be right, though, to keep all that wealth for myself. I shall have to distribute it. But to whom ? Well, 678 rubles to Cappel, and then we'll see.' . . . Quite vague visions now cloud his mind, and only Vanyusha's voice and the interrupted motion of the sledge break his healthy youthful slumber. Scarcely conscious, he changes into another sledge at the next stage and continues his journey.

Next morning everything goes on just the same : the same kind of post-stations and tea-drinking, the same moving horses' cruppers, the same short talks with Vanyusha, the same vague dreams and drowsiness, and the same tired, healthy, youthful sleep at night.

CHAPTER III

THE farther Olenin travelled from Central Russia, the farther he left his memories behind and the nearer he drew to the Caucasus, the lighter his heart became. 'I'll stay away for good, and never return to show myself in society,'

was a thought that sometimes occurred to him. 'These people whom I see here are *not* people. None of them know me, and none of them can ever enter the Moscow society I was in, or find out about my past. And no one in that society will ever know what I am doing, living among these people.' And quite a new feeling of freedom from his whole past came over him among the rough beings he met on the road, whom he did not consider to be *people* in the sense that his Moscow acquaintances were.

The rougher the people and the fewer the signs of civilization, the freer he felt. Stavropol, through which he had to pass, irked him. The signboards, some of them even in French, ladies in carriages, cabs in the market-place, and a gentleman wearing a fur cloak and tall hat who was walking along the boulevard and staring at the passers-by, quite upset him. 'Perhaps these people know some of my acquaintances,' he thought; and the club, his tailor, cards, society . . . came back to his mind. But, after Stavropol, everything was satisfactory—wild and also beautiful and warlike, and Olenin felt happier and happier. All the Cossacks, post-boys and post-station masters seemed to him simple folk, with whom he could jest and converse simply, without having to consider to what class they belonged. They all belonged to the human race, which, without his thinking about it, all appeared dear to Olenin; and they all treated him in a friendly way.

Already, in the province of the Don Cossacks, his sledge had been exchanged for a cart; and beyond Stavropol it became so warm that Olenin

travelled without wearing his sheepskin. It was already Spring—an unexpected joyous Spring for Olenin. At night he was no longer allowed to leave the Cossack villages, and they said it was dangerous to travel in the evening. Vanyusha began to be uneasy, and they carried a loaded gun in the cart. Olenin became still more joyful. At one of the post-stations the post-master told of a terrible murder that had been committed recently on the high road. They began to meet armed men. 'So this is where it begins!' thought Olenin, and kept expecting to see the snowy mountains, of which mention was so often made. Once, towards evening, the Nogay driver pointed with his whip to the mountains shrouded in clouds. Olenin looked eagerly, but it was dull, and the mountains were almost hidden by the clouds. Olenin made out something grey and white and fleecy, but, try as he would, he could find nothing beautiful in the mountains of which he had so often read and heard. The mountains and the clouds appeared to him quite alike, and he thought the special beauty of the snow peaks, of which he had so often been told, was as much an invention as Bach's music and the love for women, which he did not believe in. So he gave up looking forward to see the mountains.

But early next morning, being awakened in his cart by the freshness of the air, he glanced carelessly to the right. The morning was perfectly clear. Suddenly he saw, about twenty paces away as it seemed to him at first glance, pure white gigantic masses with delicate contours, the distinct fantastic outlines of their summits showing sharply against the far-off sky. When

he had realized the distance between himself and them and the sky, and the whole immensity of the mountains, and felt the infinitude of all that beauty, he became afraid that it was but a phantasm or a dream. He gave himself a shake to rouse himself, but the mountains were still the same.

‘What’s that? What is it?’ he said to the driver.

‘Why, the mountains,’ answered the Nogay driver with indifference.

‘And I too have been looking at them for a long while,’ said Vanyusha. ‘Aren’t they fine? They won’t believe it at home.’

The quick progress of the three-horsed cart along the smooth road caused the mountains to appear to be running along the horizon, while their rosy crests glittered in the light of the rising sun. At first Olenin was only astonished at the sight, then gladdened by it; but later on, gazing more and more intently at that snow-peaked chain, that seemed to rise not from behind other, black, mountains, but straight out of the plain, and to glide away into the distance, he began by slow degrees to be penetrated by their beauty, and at length to *feel* the mountains. From that moment all he saw, all he thought, and all he felt, acquired for him a new character, sternly majestic, like the mountains! All his Moscow reminiscences, shame and repentance, and his trivial dreams about the Caucasus, vanished and did not return. ‘Now it has begun,’ a solemn voice seemed to say to him. The road, and the Terek, just becoming visible in the distance, and the Cossack villages and the people, all no longer

appeared to him as a joke. He looked at himself or Vanyusha, and again thought of the mountains Two Cossacks ride by, their guns in their cases swinging rhythmically behind their backs, the white and bay legs of their horses mingling confusedly . . . and the mountains ! Beyond the Terek rises the smoke from a Tartar village . . . and the mountains ! The sun has risen and glitters on the Terek now visible beyond the reeds . . . and the mountains ! From the village comes a Tartar wagon, and women, beautiful young women, pass by . . . and the mountains ! ‘*Abreks*¹ canter about the plain, and here am I driving along and do not fear them ! I have a gun, and strength, and youth . . . and the mountains !’

CHAPTER IV

THAT whole part of the Terek line (about fifty miles) along which lie the villages of the Grebенск Cossacks, is uniform in character, both as to the country and the inhabitants. The Terek, which separates the Cossacks from the hill-tribes, still flows turbid and rapid though already broad and smooth, always depositing greyish sand on its low reedy right bank, and washing away the steep, though not high, left bank, with its roots of century-old oaks, its rotting plane trees and young brushwood. On the right bank lie the villages of pro-Russian, though still somewhat restless, Tartars. Along the left bank, back half

¹ Hostile Chechens who cross over to the Russian bank of the Terek to thieve and plunder.

a mile from the river and standing five or six miles apart from one another, are Cossack villages. In olden times most of these villages were situated on the banks of the river; but the Terek, shifting northward from the mountains year by year, washed away these banks, and now there remain only the ruins of the old villages, and of the gardens of pear and plum trees and poplars, all overgrown with blackberry bushes and wild vines. No one lives there now, and one only sees the tracks of the deer, the wolves, the hares, and the pheasants, who have learned to love these places. From village to village runs a road cut through the forest as a cannon-shot might fly. Along the roads are cordons of Cossacks, and watch-towers with sentinels in them. Only a narrow strip of about seven hundred yards of fertile wooded soil belongs to the Cossacks. To the north of it begin the sand-drifts of the Nogay or Mozdok Steppes, which stretch far to the north and run, Heaven knows where, into the Trukhmen, Astrakhan and Kirghiz-Kaisatsk Steppes. To the south, beyond the Terek, are the great Chechnya river, the Kochkalov range, the Black Mountains, yet another range, and at last the snow mountains, which can just be seen but have never yet been scaled. In this fertile wooded strip, rich in vegetation, has dwelt, as far back as memory runs, the fine warlike and prosperous Russian tribe belonging to the sect of Old Believers,¹ and called the Grebensk Cossacks.

¹ Old Believers is a general name for the sects that separated from the Russo-Greek Church in the seventeenth century. Tobacco is one of the things prohibited by their rules.

Long long ago their Old Believer ancestors fled from Russia, and settled beyond the Terek among the Chechens on the Greben, the first range of wooded mountains of Chechnya. Living among the Chechens, the Cossacks intermarried with them, and adopted the manners and customs of the hill tribes, though they still retained the Russian language in all its purity, as well as their Old Faith. A tradition, still fresh among them, declares that Tsar John the Terrible came to the Terek, sent for their Elders, and gave them the land on this side of the river, exhorting them to remain friendly to Russia, and promising not to enforce his rule upon them nor oblige them to change their faith. Even now the Cossack families claim relationship with the Chechens, and the love of freedom, of leisure, of plunder and of war, still form their chief characteristics. Only the harmful side of Russian influence is apparent—by interference at elections, by confiscation of church bells, and by the troops who are quartered in the country, or march through it.

A Cossack is inclined to hate less the *dzhigit*¹ hillsman, who maybe has killed his brother, than the soldier quartered on him to defend his village, but who has defiled his hut with tobacco-smoke. He respects his enemy the hillsman, and despises the soldier; who is in his eyes an alien and an oppressor. In reality, from a Cossack's point of view, a Russian peasant is a foreign, savage, despicable creature, of whom he sees a sample in the hawkers who come to the country, and in the

¹ Among the Chechens, a *dzhigit* is much the same as a *brave* among the Indians; but the word is inseparably connected with the idea of skilful horsemanship.

Little-Russian immigrants whom the Cossack contemptuously calls 'woolbeaters'. For him, to be smartly dressed, means to be dressed like a Circassian. The best weapons are obtained from the hillsmen, and the best horses are bought, or stolen, from them. A dashing young Cossack likes to show off his knowledge of Tartar, and when carousing talks Tartar even to his fellow Cossack.

In spite of all these things this small Christian clan, stranded in a tiny corner of the earth, surrounded by half-savage Mohammedan tribes and by soldiers, considers itself highly advanced, acknowledges none but Cossacks as human beings, and despises everybody else. The Cossack spends most of his time in the cordon, in action, or in hunting and fishing. He hardly ever works at home. When he stays in the village, it is an exception to the general rule, and then he is holiday-making. All Cossacks make their own wine, and drunkenness is not so much a general tendency as a rite, the non-fulfilment of which would be considered apostasy. The Cossack looks upon a woman as an instrument for his welfare ; only the unmarried girls are allowed to amuse themselves. A married woman has to work for her husband from youth to very old age : his demands on her are the Oriental ones of submission and labour. In consequence of this outlook, women are strongly developed, both physically and mentally ; and though they are—as everywhere in the East—nominally in subjection, they possess far greater influence and importance in family-life than Western women. The exclusion from public life and inurement to heavy male

labour, give the women all the more power and importance in the household. A Cossack, who before strangers considers it improper to speak affectionately or needlessly to his wife, when alone with her is involuntarily conscious of her superiority. His house and all his property, in fact the entire homestead, has been acquired and is kept together solely by her labour and care. Though firmly convinced that labour is degrading to a Cossack, and is only proper for a Nogay labourer or a woman, he is vaguely aware of the fact that all he makes use of and calls his own is the result of that toil, and that it is in the power of the woman (his mother or his wife) whom he considers his slave, to deprive him of all he possesses. Besides, the continuous performance of man's heavy work and the responsibilities entrusted to her, have endowed the Grebensk women with a peculiarly independent, masculine character, and have remarkably developed their physical powers, common sense, resolution, and stability. The women are in most cases stronger, more intelligent, more developed, and handsomer, than the men. A striking feature of a Grebensk woman's beauty is the combination of the purest Circassian type of face with the broad and powerful build of Northern women. Cossack women wear the Circassian dress: a Tartar smock, *beshmet*,¹ and soft slippers; but they tie their kerchiefs round their heads in the Russian fashion. Smartness, cleanliness and elegance in dress and in the arrangement of their huts, are with them a custom and a necessity. In their relations with men the

¹ *Beshmet*, a Tartar garment with sleeves.

women, and especially the unmarried girls, enjoy perfect freedom.

Novomlinsk village was considered the very heart of Grebensk Cossackdom. In it more than elsewhere the customs of the old Grebensk population have been preserved ; and its women have from time immemorial been renowned all over the Caucasus for their beauty. A Cossack's livelihood is derived from vineyards, fruit-gardens, water melon and pumpkin plantations, from fishing, hunting, maize and millet growing, and from war plunder. Novomlinsk village lies about two and a half miles away from the Terek, from which it is separated by a dense forest. On one side of the road, which runs through the village, is the river ; on the other, green vineyards and orchards, beyond which are seen the driftsands of the Nogay Steppe. The village is surrounded by earth-banks and prickly bramble hedges, and is entered by tall gates hung on posts, and covered with little reed-thatched roofs. Beside them stands, on a wooden gun-carriage, an unwieldy cannon, captured by the Cossacks at some time or other, and which has not been fired for a hundred years. A uniformed Cossack sentinel, with dagger and gun, sometimes stands, and sometimes does not stand, on guard beside the gate, and sometimes presents arms to a passing officer, and sometimes does not.

Below the roof of the gateway is written in black letters on a white board : 'Houses 266 : male inhabitants 897 : female 1012.' The Cossacks' houses are all raised on pillars two-and-a-half feet from the ground. They are carefully thatched with reeds, and have large carved

gables. If not new, they are at least all straight and clean, with high porches of different shapes ; and they are not built close together but have ample space around them, and are all picturesquely placed along broad streets and lanes. In front of the large clear windows of many of the houses, beyond the kitchen gardens, dark green poplars and acacias with their delicate pale verdure and scented white blossoms overtop the houses, and beside them grow bold-faced yellow sunflowers, creepers, and grape vines. In the broad open square are three shops, where drapery, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, locust beans and gingerbreads are sold ; and surrounded by a tall fence, loftier and larger than the other houses, stands, behind a row of tall poplars, the Regimental Commander's dwelling with its casement windows. Few people are to be seen in the streets of the village on weekdays, especially in summer. The young men are on duty in the cordons, or on military expeditions ; the old ones are fishing or helping the women in the orchards and gardens. Only the very old, the sick, and the children, remain at home.

CHAPTER V

IT was one of those rare evenings that occur only in the Caucasus. The sun had sunk behind the mountains, but it was yet light. The evening glow had spread over a third of the sky, and against its light the dull white immensity of the mountains was sharply defined. The air was rarefied, motionless, and full of sound. The shadow of the mountains reached for several

miles over the steppe. The steppe, the opposite side of the river, and the roads, were all deserted. If, very occasionally, mounted men appeared, the Cossacks in the cordon and the Chechens in their *aouls* (villages) watched them with surprised curiosity, and tried to guess who those questionable men could be.

At nightfall people from fear of one another flock to their dwellings, and only birds and beasts fearless of man prowl in those deserted spaces. Talking merrily, the women, who have been tying up the vines, hurry away from the gardens before sunset. The vineyards, like all the surrounding district, are deserted, but the villages become very animated at that time of the evening. From all sides, walking, riding, or driving in their creaking carts, people move towards the village. Girls with their smocks tucked up and twigs in their hands, run chatting merrily to the village gates to meet the cattle that are crowding together in a cloud of dust and mosquitoes which they bring with them from the steppe. The well-fed cows and buffaloes disperse at a run all over the streets, and Cossack women in coloured *beshmets* go to and fro among them. You can hear their merry laughter and shrieks mingling with the lowing of the cattle. There an armed and mounted Cossack, on leave from the cordon, rides up to a hut and, leaning towards the window, knocks. In answer to the knock the handsome head of a young woman appears at the window, and you can hear caressing, laughing voices. There a tattered Nogay labourer with prominent cheek-bones, brings a load of reeds from the steppes, turns his creaking cart into the Cossack captain's

broad and clean courtyard, and lifts the yoke off the oxen, that stand tossing their heads, while he and his master shout to one another in Tartar. Past a puddle that reaches nearly across the street, a barefooted Cossack woman, with a bundle of firewood on her back, makes her laborious way by clinging to the fences, holding her smock high and exposing her white legs. A Cossack returning from shooting calls out in jest: 'Lift it higher, shameless thing!' and points his gun at her. The woman lets down her smock and drops the wood. An old Cossack, returning home from fishing with his trousers tucked up and his hairy grey chest uncovered, has a net across his shoulder containing silvery fish that are still struggling; and, to take a short cut, climbs over his neighbour's broken fence and gives a tug to his coat which has caught on the fence. There a woman is dragging a dry branch along, and from round the corner comes the sound of an axe. Cossack children, spinning their tops wherever there is a smooth place in the street, are shrieking; women are climbing over fences to avoid going round. From every chimney rises the scented *kisyak*¹ smoke. From every homestead comes the sound of increased bustle, precursor to the stillness of night.

Granny Ulitka, the wife of the Cossack Cornet who is also Teacher in the regimental school, goes out to the gates of her yard, like the other women, and waits for the cattle which her daughter Maryanka is driving along the street. Before she has had time fully to open the wattle

¹ *Kisyak*, fuel made of straw and manure.

gate in the fence, an enormous buffalo cow, surrounded by mosquitoes, rushes up bellowing, and squeezes in. Several well-fed cows slowly follow her, their large eyes gazing with recognition at their mistress as they swish their sides with their tails.

The beautiful and shapely Maryanka enters at the gate and, throwing away her switch, quickly slams the gate to, and rushes with all the speed of her nimble feet to separate and drive the cattle into their sheds. 'Take off your slippers, you devil's wench !' shouts her mother, 'you'll wear them into holes !' Maryanka is not at all offended at being called a 'devil's wench', but, accepting it as a term of endearment, cheerfully goes on with her task. Her face is covered with a kerchief tied round her head. She is wearing a pink smock and a green *beshmet*. She disappears inside the lean-to shed in the yard, following the big fat cattle ; and from the shed comes her voice as she speaks gently and persuasively to the buffalo : 'Won't she stand still ? What a creature ! Come now, come old dear !' Soon the girl and the old woman pass from the shed to the out-house, carrying two large pots of milk, the day's yield. From the chimney of the out-house rises a thin cloud of *kisyak* smoke : the milk is being used to make into clotted cream. The girl makes up the fire, while her mother goes to the gate. Twilight has fallen on the village. The air is full of the smell of vegetables, cattle, and scented *kisyak* smoke. From the gates and along the streets Cossack women come running, carrying burning rags. From the yards, one hears the snorting and quiet chewing of the cattle, eased of their milk ; while in the

street only the voices of women and children sound, as they call to one another. It is rare on a week-day to hear the drunken voice of a man.

One of the Cossack wives, a tall, masculine old woman, approaches Granny Ulitka from the homestead opposite, and asks her for a light. In her hand she holds a rag.

‘Have you cleared up, Granny?’

‘The girl is lighting the fire. Is it fire you want?’ says Granny Ulitka, proud of being able to oblige her neighbour.

Both women enter the hut, and coarse hands, unused to dealing with small articles, tremblingly remove the lid of a match-box, which is rare in the Caucasus. The masculine-looking new-comer sits down on the door-step, with the evident intention of having a chat.

‘And is your man at the school, Mother?’ she asked.

‘He’s always teaching the youngsters, Mother. But he writes that he’ll come home for the holidays,’ said the Teacher’s wife.

‘Yes, he’s a clever man, one sees; it all comes useful.’

‘Of course it does.’

‘And my Lukashka is at the cordon; they won’t let him come home,’ said the visitor, though the Teacher’s wife had known all this long ago. She wanted to talk about her Lukashka, whom she had lately fitted out for service in the Cossack regiment, and whom she wished to marry to the Teacher’s daughter, Maryanka.

‘So he’s at the cordon?’

‘He is, Mother. He’s not been home since last holidays. The other day I sent him some shirts

by Fomushkin. He says he 's all right, and that his superiors are satisfied. He says they are looking out for *abreks* again. Lukashka is quite happy, he says.'

'Ah well, thank God,' said the Teacher's wife. '"Snatcher" is certainly the only word for him.' Lukashka was surnamed 'the Snatcher' because of his bravery in snatching a boy from a watery grave, and the Teacher's wife alluded to this, wishing in her turn to say something agreeable to Lukashka's mother.

'I thank God, Mother, that he 's a good son ! He 's a fine fellow, everyone praises him,' says Lukashka's mother. 'All I wish is, to get him married ; then I could die in peace.'

'Well, aren't there plenty of young women in the village ?' answered the Teacher's sly wife, as she carefully replaced the lid of the match-box with her horny hands.

'Plenty, Mother, plenty,' remarked Lukashka's mother, shaking her head. 'There 's your girl now, your Maryanka—that 's the sort of girl ! You 'd have to search through the whole place to find such another !'

The Teacher's wife knows what Lukashka's mother is after ; but though she believes him to be a good Cossack, she hangs back : first because she is a Teacher's wife and rich, while Lukashka is the son of a simple Cossack and fatherless ; secondly because she does not want to part with her daughter yet ; but chiefly, because propriety demands it.

'Well, when Maryanka grows up she 'll be marriageable too,' she answers soberly and modestly.

‘ I’ll send the matchmakers to you—I’ll send them ! Only let me get the vineyard done, and then we’ll come and make our bows to you,’ says Lukashka’s mother. ‘ And we’ll make our bows to Elias Vasilich too.’

‘ Elias, indeed !’ says the Teacher’s wife, proudly. ‘ It’s to me you must speak ! All in its own good time.’

Lukashka’s mother sees by the stern face of the Teacher’s wife that it is not the time to say anything more just now, so she lights her rag with the match, and says, rising ; ‘ Don’t refuse us, think of my words. I’ll go ; it is time to light the fire.’

As she crosses the road, swinging the burning rag, she meets Maryanka, who bows.

‘ Ah, she’s a regular queen, a splendid worker, that girl !’ she thinks, looking at the beautiful maiden. ‘ What need for her to grow any more ? It’s time she was married, and into a good home ; married to Lukashka !’

But Granny Ulitka had her own cares, and she remained sitting on the threshold, thinking hard about something, till the girl called her.

CHAPTER VI

THE male population of the village spend their time on military expeditions and in the cordon—or ‘ at their posts’, as the Cossacks say. Towards evening, that same Lukashka the Snatcher, about whom the old women had been talking, was standing on a watch-tower of the Nizhne-Prototsk post, situated on the very banks of the Terek. Leaning on the railing of the tower and screwing

up his eyes, he looked, now far into the distance beyond the Terek, now down at his fellow Cossacks, and occasionally he addressed the latter. The sun was already approaching the snowy range that gleamed white above the fleecy clouds. The clouds undulating at the base of the mountains grew darker and darker. The clearness of evening was noticeable in the air. A sense of freshness came from the woods, though round the post it was still hot. The voices of the talking Cossacks vibrated more sonorously than before. The moving mass of the Terek's rapid brown waters contrasted more vividly with its motionless banks. The waters were beginning to subside, and here and there the wet sands gleamed drab on the banks and in the shallows. The other side of the river, just opposite the cordon, was deserted; only an immense waste of low-growing reeds stretched far away to the very foot of the mountains. On the low bank, a little to one side, could be seen the flat-roofed clay houses and the funnel-shaped chimneys of a Chechen village. The sharp eyes of the Cossack who stood on the watch-tower followed, through the evening smoke of the pro-Russian village, the tiny moving figures of the Chechen women, visible in the distance in their red and blue garments.

Although the Cossacks expected *abreks* to cross over and attack them from the Tartar side at any moment, especially as it was May, when the woods by the Terek are so dense that it is difficult to pass through them on foot and the river is shallow enough in places for a horseman to ford it, and despite the fact that a couple of days before a Cossack had arrived with a circular from the

Commander of the regiment, announcing that spies had reported the intention of a party of some eight men to cross the Terek, and ordering special vigilance—no special vigilance was being observed in the cordon. The Cossacks, unarmed and with their horses unsaddled, just as if they were at home, spent their time some in fishing, some in drinking, and some in hunting. Only the horse of the man on duty was saddled and, with its feet hobbled, was moving about by the brambles near the wood ; and only the sentinel had his Circassian coat on and carried a gun and sword. The Corporal, a tall thin Cossack with an exceptionally long back and small hands and feet, was sitting on the earth-bank of a hut, with his *beshmet* unbuttoned. On his face was the lazy, bored expression of a superior, and, having shut his eyes, he dropped his head upon the palm first of one hand and then of the other. An elderly Cossack, with a broad greyish-black beard, was lying in his shirt, girdled with a black strap, close to the river and gazing lazily at the waves of the Terek as they monotonously foamed and swirled. Others, also overcome by the heat and half naked, were rinsing clothes in the Terek, plaiting a fishing line, or humming tunes as they lay on the hot sand of the river bank. One Cossack, with a thin face burnt black by the sun, lay near the hut, evidently dead drunk, by a wall which, though it had been in shadow some two hours previously, was now exposed to the sun's fierce slanting rays.

Lukashka, who stood on the watch-tower, was a tall handsome lad about twenty years old, and very like his mother. His face and whole build,

in spite of the angularity of youth, indicated great strength, both physical and moral. Though he had only lately joined the Cossacks at the front, it was evident from the expression of his face and the calm assurance of his attitude that he had already acquired the somewhat proud and warlike bearing peculiar to Cossacks and to men generally who continually carry arms ; and that he felt he was a Cossack and fully knew his own value. His ample Circassian coat was torn in some places ; his cap was on the back of his head, Chechen fashion, and his leggings had slipped below his knees. His clothing was not rich, but he wore it with that peculiar Cossack foppishness which consists in imitating the Chechen brave. Everything on a real brave is ample, ragged, and neglected ; only his weapons are costly. But these ragged clothes and these weapons are belted and worn with a certain air and matched in a certain manner, neither of which can be acquired by everybody, and which at once strike the eye of a Cossack or a hillsman. Lukashka had this resemblance to a brave. With his hands folded behind his cap, and his eyes nearly closed, he kept looking at the distant Tartar village. Taken separately, his features were not beautiful, but any one who saw his stately carriage, and his dark-browed intelligent face, would involuntarily say ‘ What a fine fellow ! ’

‘ Look at the women, what a lot of them are walking about in the village,’ said he in a sharp voice, languidly showing his brilliant white teeth, and not addressing any one in particular. But Nazarka, who was lying below, immediately lifted his head, and remarked :

‘They must be going for water.’

‘Supposing one scared them with a gun?’ said Lukashka, laughing. ‘Wouldn’t they be frightened?’

‘It wouldn’t reach.’

‘What! Mine would carry beyond. Just wait a bit, and when their feast comes round I’ll go and visit Girey Khan and drink *buza*¹ there,’ said Lukashka, angrily swishing away the mosquitoes which clung about him.

A rustling in the thicket drew the Cossack’s attention. A pied mongrel half-setter, searching for a scent and violently wagging its scantily furred tail, came running to the cordon. Lukashka recognized the dog as one belonging to his neighbour, Uncle Eroshka, a hunter, and saw, following it through the thicket, the approaching figure of the hunter himself.

Uncle Eroshka was a gigantic Cossack with a broad, snow-white beard, and such broad shoulders and chest that in the wood where there was no one to compare him with, he did not look particularly tall, so well proportioned were his powerful limbs. He wore a tattered coat and, over the bands with which his legs were swathed, sandals made of undressed deer’s hide, tied on with strings; while on his head he had a rough little white cap. He carried over one shoulder a screen to hide behind when shooting pheasants, and a bag containing a hen for luring hawks, and a small falcon; over the other shoulder, attached by a strap, was a wild cat he had killed; and stuck in his belt behind were some little bags containing bullets, gunpowder and bread; a horse’s

¹ Tartar beer made of millet.

tail to swish away the mosquitoes, a large dagger in a torn scabbard smeared with old bloodstains, and two dead pheasants. Having glanced at the cordon, he halted.

‘Hi, Lyam !’ he called to the dog, in such a ringing bass that it awoke an echo far away in the wood ; and throwing over his shoulder his big gun, of the kind the Cossacks call a ‘flint’, he raised his cap.

‘Had a good day, good people, eh ?’ he said, addressing the Cossacks in the same strong and cheerful voice, quite without effort but as loudly as if he were shouting to some one on the other bank of the river.

‘Yes, yes, Uncle !’ answered from all sides the voices of the young Cossacks.

‘What have you seen ? Tell us !’ shouted Uncle Eroshka, wiping the sweat from his broad red face with the sleeve of his coat.

‘Ah, there’s a vulture living in the plane tree here, Uncle. As soon as night comes he begins hovering round,’ said Nazarka, winking, and jerking his shoulder and leg.

‘Come, come !’ said the old man incredulously.

‘Really, Uncle ! You just watch,’ replied Nazarka, with a laugh.

The other Cossacks began laughing.

The wag had not seen any vulture at all, but it had long been the custom of the young Cossacks in the cordon to tease and mislead Uncle Eroshka every time he came to them.

‘Eh, you fool, always lying !’ exclaimed Lukashka from the tower to Nazarka.

Nazarka was immediately silenced.

‘It must be watched. I’ll watch,’ answered

the old man, to the great delight of all the Cossacks. 'But have you seen any boars ?'

'Watching for boars, are you ?' said the Corporal, bending forward and scratching his back with both hands, very pleased at the chance of some distraction. 'It's *abreks* one has to hunt here, and not boars ! You've not heard anything, Uncle, have you ?' he added, needlessly screwing up his eyes, and showing his close-set white teeth.

'*Abreks* ?' said the old man. 'No, I've not. I say, have you any *chikhir* ?'¹ Let me have a drink, there's a good man. I'm really quite done up. When the time comes, I'll bring you some fresh meat, I really will. Give me a drink !' he added.

'Well, and are you going to watch ?' inquired the Corporal, as though he had not heard what the other said.

'I did mean to watch to-night,' replied Uncle Eroszka. 'Maybe, with God's help, I shall kill something for the holiday. Then you shall have a share, you shall indeed !'

'Uncle ! Hallo, Uncle !' called out Lukashka sharply from above, attracting everybody's attention. All the Cossacks looked up at him. 'Just go to the upper water-course, there's a fine herd of boars there. I'm not inventing, really ! The other day one of our Cossacks shot one there. I'm telling you the truth,' added he, readjusting the musket at his back, and in a tone that showed he was not joking.

'Ah ! Lukashka the Snatcher is here !' said the old man, looking up. 'Where has he been shooting ?'

¹ Home-made Caucasian wine.

‘Haven’t you seen? I suppose you’re too young !’ said Lukashka. ‘Close by the ditch,’ he went on seriously, with a shake of the head. ‘We were just going along the ditch when all at once we heard something crackling, but my gun was in its case. Elias fired suddenly. . . . But I’ll show you the place, it’s not far. You just wait a bit. I know every one of their footpaths. . . . Daddy Mosev,’ said he, turning resolutely and almost commandingly to the Corporal, ‘it’s time to relieve guard !’ and, holding aloft his gun, he began to descend from the watch-tower, without waiting for the order.

‘Come down !’ said the Corporal, after Lukashka had started, and glanced round. ‘Is it your turn, Gurka? Then go. . . . True enough, your Lukashka has become very skilful,’ he went on, addressing the old man. ‘He keeps going about just like you, he doesn’t stay at home. The other day he killed a boar.’

CHAPTER VII

THE sun had already set, and the shades of night were rapidly spreading from the edge of the wood. The Cossacks finished their task round the cordon, and gathered in the hut for supper. Only the old man still stayed under the plane tree, watching for the vulture and pulling the string tied to the falcon’s leg, but though a vulture was really perching on the plane tree it declined to swoop down on the lure. Lukashka, singing one song after another, was leisurely placing nets among the very thickest brambles to trap pheasants. In spite of his tall stature

and big hands, every kind of work, both rough and delicate, prospered under Lukashka's fingers.

' Hallo, Luke ! ' came Nazarka's shrill, sharp voice calling him from the thicket close by. ' The Cossacks have gone in to supper.' And Nazarka, with a live pheasant under his arm, forced his way through the brambles, and emerged on the footpath.

' Oh ! ' said Lukashka, breaking off in his song, ' where did you get that cock-pheasant ? I suppose it was in my trap ? '

Nazarka was of the same age as Lukashka, and had also only been at the front since the previous spring. He was plain, thin and puny, with a shrill voice that rang in one's ears. They were neighbours and comrades. Lukashka was sitting on the grass, cross-legged like a Tartar, adjusting his nets.

' I don't know whose it was—yours, I expect.'

' Was it beyond the pit, by the plane tree ? Then it is mine ! I set the nets last night.'

Lukashka rose and examined the captured pheasant. After stroking the dark burnished head of the bird, which rolled its eyes and stretched out its neck in terror, Lukashka took the pheasant in his hands.

' We'll have it in a *pilav*¹ to-night. You go and kill and pluck it.'

' And shall we eat it ourselves, or give it to the Corporal ? '

' He has plenty ! '

' I don't like killing them,' said Nazarka.

' Give it here ! '

Lukashka drew a little knife from under his dagger and gave it a swift jerk. The bird fluttered,

¹ A kind of stew, made with boiled rice.

but before it could spread its wings the bleeding head bent and quivered. 'That's how one should do it !' said Lukashka, throwing down the pheasant. 'It will make a fat *pilav*.'

Nazarka shuddered as he looked at the bird.

'I say, Lukashka, that fiend will be sending us to lie in ambush again to-night,' he said, taking up the bird. (He was alluding to the Corporal.) 'He has sent Fomushkin to get wine, and it ought to be his turn. He always puts it on us.'

Luskashka went whistling along the cordon. 'Take the string with you,' he shouted ; and Nazarka obeyed.

'I'll give him a bit of my mind, to-day, I really will,' continued Nazarka. 'Let's say we won't go ; we're tired out, and there's an end of it ! No, really, you tell them ; they'll listen to you. It's too bad !'

'Get along with you ! What a thing to make a fuss about !' said Lukashka, evidently thinking of something else. 'What bosh ! If he made us turn out of the village at night now, that would be annoying : there one can have some fun, but here, what is there ? It's all one whether we're in the cordon or in ambush. What a chap you are !'

'And are you going to the village ?'

'I'll go for the holidays.'

'Gurka says your Dunayka is carrying on with Fomushkin,' said Nazarka suddenly.

'Well, let her go to the devil,' said Lukashka, showing his regular white teeth, though he did not laugh. 'As if I couldn't find another !'

'Gurka says he went to her house. Her husband was out, and there was Fomushkin sitting and eating pie. Gurka stopped awhile and then went away, and passing by the window he heard her say,

"He's gone, the fiend. . . . Why don't you eat your pie, my own? You needn't go home for the night," she says. And Gurka under the window, says to himself, "Fine, that!"'

'You're making it up.'

'No, quite true, by Heaven!'

'Well, if she's found another, let her go to the devil,' said Lukashka, after a pause. 'There's no lack of girls, and I was sick of her anyway.'

'Well, see what a devil you are!' said Nazarka. 'You should make up to the Teacher's girl, Maryanka. Why doesn't she walk out with any one?'

Lukashka frowned. 'What of Maryanka? They're all alike,' said he.

'Well, you just try . . .'

'What do you think? Are girls so scarce in the village?'

And Lukashka recommenced whistling, and went along the cordon, pulling leaves and branches from the bushes as he went. Suddenly, catching sight of a smooth sapling, he drew the knife from the handle of his dagger, and cut it down. 'What a ramrod it will make,' he said, swinging the sapling till it whistled through the air.

The Cossacks were sitting round a low Tartar table on the earthen floor of the clay-plastered outer room of the hut, when the question of whose turn it was to lie in ambush was raised.

'Who is to go to-night?' shouted one of the Cossacks, through the open door, to the Corporal in the next room.

'Who is to go?' the Corporal shouted back. 'Uncle Burlak has been, and Fomushkin too,' said

he, not quite confidently. ' You two had better go, you and Nazarka,' he went on, addressing Lukashka. ' And Ergushov must go too ; surely he has slept it off ? '

' You don't sleep it off yourself, so why should he ? ' said Nazarka in a subdued voice.

The Cossacks laughed.

Ergushov was the Cossack who had been lying drunk and asleep near the hut. He had only that moment staggered into the room, rubbing his eyes.

Lukashka had already risen, and was getting his gun ready.

' Be quick and go ! Finish your supper and go ! ' said the Sergeant ; and without waiting for an expression of consent he shut the door, evidently not expecting the Cossack to obey. ' Of course,' thought he, ' if I hadn't been ordered to, I wouldn't send anyone ; but an officer might turn up at any moment. As it is, they say eight *abreks* have crossed over.'

' Well, I suppose I must go,' remarked Ergushov, ' it's the regulation. Can't be helped ! The times are such. I say, we must go.'

Meanwhile Lukashka, holding a big piece of pheasant to his mouth with both hands, and glancing now at Nazarka, now at Ergushov, seemed quite indifferent to what passed, and only laughed at them both. Before the Cossacks were ready to go into ambush, Uncle Eroshka, who had been vainly waiting under the plane tree till night fell, entered the dark outer room.

' Well, lads,' his loud bass resounded through the low-roofed room, drowning all the other voices, ' I'm going with you. You'll watch for Chechens, and I for boars ! '

CHAPTER VIII

IT was quite dark when Uncle Eroshka and the three Cossacks, in their cloaks and shouldering their guns, left the cordon and went towards the place on the Terek where they were to lie in ambush.

Nazarka did not want to go at all, but Lukashka shouted at him, and they soon started. After they had gone a few steps in silence, the Cossacks turned aside from the ditch and went along a path almost hidden by reeds, till they reached the river. On its bank lay a thick black log cast up by the water. The reeds around it had been recently beaten down.

‘Shall we lie here?’ asked Nazarka.

‘Why not?’ answered Lukashka. ‘Sit down here, and I’ll be back in a minute. I’ll only show Daddy where to go.’

‘This is the best place; here we can see and not be seen,’ said Ergushov, ‘so it’s here we’ll lie. It’s a first-rate place!’

Nazarka and Ergushov spread out their cloaks and settled down behind the log, while Lukashka went on with Uncle Eroshka.

‘It’s not far from here, Daddy,’ said Lukashka, stepping softly in front of the old man; ‘I’ll show you where they’ve been—I’m the only one that knows, Daddy.’

‘Show me! You’re a fine fellow, a regular Snatcher!’ replied the old man, also whispering.

Having gone a few steps, Lukashka stopped, stooped down over a puddle, and whistled. ‘That’s where they come to drink, d’you see?’ He spoke

in a scarcely audible voice, pointing to fresh hoof-prints.

‘Christ bless you,’ answered the old man. ‘The boar will be in the hollow beyond the ditch,’ he added. ‘I’ll watch, and you can go.’

Lukashka pulled his cloak up higher and walked back alone, throwing swift glances, now to the left at the wall of reeds, now to the Terek rushing by below the bank. ‘I daresay he’s watching or creeping along somewhere,’ thought he of a possible Chechen hillsman. Suddenly a loud rustling and a splash in the water made him start and seize his musket. From under the bank a boar leapt out—his dark outline showing for a moment against the glassy surface of the water and then disappearing among the reeds. Lukashka pulled out his gun and aimed ; but, before he could fire, the boar had disappeared in the thicket. Lukashka spat with vexation, and went on. On approaching the ambuscade he halted again, and whistled softly. His whistle was answered and he stepped up to his comrades.

Nazarka, all curled up, was already asleep. Ergushov sat with his legs crossed, and moved slightly to make room for Lukashka.

‘How jolly it is to sit here ! It’s really a good place,’ said he. ‘Did you take him there ?’

‘Showed him where,’ answered Lukashka, spreading out his cloak. ‘But what a big boar I roused just now, close to the water ! I expect it was the very one ! You must have heard the crash ?’

‘I did hear a beast crashing through. I knew at once it was a beast. I thought to myself : “Lukashka has roused a beast,”’ Ergushov said,

wrapping himself up in his cloak. 'Now I'll go to sleep,' he added. 'Wake me when the cocks crow. We must have discipline. I'll lie down and have a nap ; and then you will have a nap and I'll watch—that's the way.'

'Luckily, I don't want to sleep,' answered Lukashka.

The night was dark, warm, and still. Only on one side of the sky the stars were shining ; the other and greater part was overcast by one huge cloud, stretching from the mountain-tops. The black cloud, blending, in the absence of any wind, with the mountains, moved slowly onwards, its curved edges sharply defined against the deep starry sky. Only in front of him could the Cossack discern the Terek and the distance beyond. Behind, and on both sides, he was surrounded by a wall of reeds. Occasionally the reeds would sway and rustle against one another, apparently without cause. Seen from down below, against the clear part of the sky, their waving tufts looked like the feathery branches of trees. Close in front, at his very feet, was the bank, and at its base the rushing torrent. A little farther on was the moving mass of glassy brown water, which eddied rhythmically along the bank and round the shallows. Farther still, water, banks and cloud all merged together in impenetrable gloom. Along the surface of the water floated black shadows, in which the experienced eyes of the Cossack detected trees carried down by the current. Only very rarely sheet-lightning, mirrored in the water as in a black glass, disclosed the sloping bank opposite. The rhythmic sounds of night—the rustling of the reeds, the snoring of the Cossacks, the hum of

mosquitoes, and the rushing water, were every now and then broken by a shot fired in the distance, or by the gurgling of water when a piece of bank slipped down, the splash of a big fish, or the crashing of an animal breaking through the thick under-growth in the wood. Once an owl flew past along the Terek, flapping one wing against the other rhythmically at every second beat. Just above the Cossack's head it turned towards the wood, and then, striking its wings, no longer after every other flap but at every flap, it flew to an old plane tree, where it rustled about for a long time before settling down among the branches. At every one of these unexpected sounds the watching Cossack listened intently, straining his hearing, and his eyes screwed up while he deliberately felt for his musket.

The greater part of the night was past. The black cloud that had moved westward revealed, from under its torn edge, the clear starry sky, and the golden upturned crescent of the moon shone above the mountains with a reddish light. The cold began to be penetrating. Nazarka awoke, spoke a little, and fell asleep again. Lukashka, feeling bored, got up, drew the knife from his dagger-handle, and began to fashion his stick into a ramrod. His head was full of the Chechens who lived over there in the mountains, and of how their brave lads came across and were not afraid of the Cossacks, and might even now be crossing the river at some other spot. He thrust himself out of his hiding-place and looked along the river, but could see nothing. And as he continued looking out at intervals upon the river and at the opposite bank, now faintly distinguishable from the water

in the faint moonlight, he no longer thought about the Chechens, but only of when it would be time to wake his comrades, and of going home to the village. In the village, he imagined Dunka, his 'little soul', as the Cossacks call a man's mistress, and thought of her with vexation. Silvery mists, a sign of coming morning, glittered white above the water, and not far from him young eagles were whistling and flapping their wings. At last the crowing of a cock reached him from the distant village, followed by the long-sustained note of another, which was again answered by yet other voices.

'Time to wake them,' thought Lukashka, who had finished his ramrod and felt his eyes growing heavy. Turning to his comrades he managed to make out which pair of legs belonged to whom, when it suddenly seemed to him that he heard something splash on the other side of the Terek. He turned again towards the horizon beyond the hills, where day was breaking under the upturned crescent, glanced at the outline of the opposite bank, at the Terek, and at the now distinctly visible driftwood upon it. For one instant it seemed to him that he was moving and that the Terek with the drifting wood remained stationary. Again he peered out. One large black log with a branch particularly attracted his attention. The tree was floating in a strange way right down the middle of the stream, neither rocking nor whirling. It even appeared not to be floating altogether with the current, but to be crossing it in the direction of the shallows. Lukashka, stretching out his neck, watched it intently. The tree floated to the shallows, stopped, and shifted

in a peculiar manner. Lukashka thought he saw an arm stretched out from beneath the tree.

‘Supposing I killed an *abrek* all by myself !’ he thought, and seized his gun with a swift, unhurried movement, putting up his gun-rest, placing the gun upon it, and holding it noiselessly in position. Cocking the trigger, with bated breath he took aim, still peering out intently.

‘I won’t wake them,’ he thought. But his heart began beating so fast that he remained motionless, listening. Suddenly the trunk gave a plunge and began again to float across the stream towards our bank.

‘Suppose I miss ? . . .’ thought he, and now by the faint light of the moon he caught a glimpse of a Tartar’s head in front of the floating wood. He aimed straight at the head, which appeared to be quite near—just at the end of his musket’s barrel. He glanced across. ‘Right enough, it is an *abrek* !’ he thought joyfully, and suddenly, rising to his knees, he again took aim. Having found the mark, just visible in a line with the end of his gun, he said: ‘In the name of the Father and of the Son’, in the Cossack way learnt in his childhood, and pulled the trigger. A flash of lightning lit up for an instant the reeds and the water ; and the sharp, abrupt report of the shot was carried across the river, changing into a prolonged roll somewhere in the far distance. The piece of driftwood now floated not across, but with, the current, rocking and whirling.

‘Hold, I say !’ exclaimed Ergushov, seizing his musket, and raising himself behind the log near which he was lying.

‘Shut up, you devil !’ whispered Lukashka, grinding his teeth. ‘*Abreks !*’

‘Whom have you shot ?’ asked Nazarka. ‘Who was it, Lukashka ?’

Lukashka did not answer. He was reloading his gun and watching the floating wood. A little way off, it stopped on a sandbank, and from behind it something large, that rocked in the water, came into view.

‘What did you shoot ? Why don’t you speak ?’ insisted the Cossacks.

‘*Abreks, I tell you !*’ said Lukashka.

‘Don’t humbug ! Did the gun go off ? . . .’

‘I’ve killed an *abrek*, that’s what I fired at,’ muttered Lukashka in a voice choked by emotion, as he jumped to his feet. ‘A man was swimming . . .’ he said, pointing to the sandbank. ‘I killed him. Just look there.’

‘Have done with your humbugging !’ said Ergushov again, rubbing his eyes.

‘Have done with what ? Look there,’ said Lukashka, seizing him by the shoulders, and pulling him with such force that Ergushov groaned.

He looked in the direction in which Lukashka pointed, and discerning a body, immediately changed his tone.

‘Oh my ! But I say, more will come ! I tell you the truth,’ said he softly, and began examining his musket. ‘That was a scout swimming across : either the others are here already, or are not far off on the other side—I tell you true !’

Lukashka was unfastening his belt and taking off his Circassian coat.

‘What are you up to, you idiot ?’ exclaimed Ergushov. ‘Only show yourself, and you’re lost,

all for nothing, I tell you true ! If you've killed him, he won't escape. Let me have a little powder for my musket-pan—you have some ? Nazar, you go back to the cordon, and look alive ; but don't go along the bank, or you'll be killed,—I tell you true.'

'Catch me going alone ! Go yourself !' said Nazarka angrily.

Having taken off his coat, Lukashka went down to the bank.

'Don't go in, I tell you !' said Ergushov, putting some powder on the pan. 'Look, he is not moving. I can see. It's nearly morning; wait till they come from the cordon. You go, Nazarka. You're afraid ! Don't be afraid, I tell you.'

'Luke, I say, Lukashka ! Tell us how you did it !' said Nazarka.

Lukashka changed his mind about going into the water just then. 'Go quick to the cordon, and I will watch. Tell the Cossacks to send out the patrol. If the *abreks* are on this side, they must be caught,' said he.

'That's what I say. They'll get off,' said Ergushov, rising. 'True, they must be caught !'

Ergushov and Nazarka rose, and, crossing themselves, started off for the cordon—not along the river bank, but breaking their way through the brambles to reach a path in the wood.

'Now mind, Lukashka—they may cut you down here, so you'd best keep a sharp look-out, I tell you !'

'Go along ; I know,' muttered Lukashka ; and having examined his gun again, he sat down behind the log.

Lukashka remained alone, and sat gazing at the

shallows and listening for the Cossacks ; but it was some distance to the cordon, and he was tormented by impatience. He kept thinking that the other *abreks* who were with the one he had killed would escape. He was vexed with the *abreks* who were going to escape, just as he had been with the boar that had escaped the evening before. He glanced round and at the opposite bank, expecting every moment to see a man ; and having arranged his gun-rest, he was ready to fire. The idea that he might himself be killed never entered his head.

CHAPTER IX

IT was growing light. The Chechen's body, which was gently rocking in the shallow water, was now clearly visible. Suddenly the reeds rustled not far from Luke, and he heard steps and saw the feathery tops of the reeds moving. He set his gun at full cock and muttered : ' In the name of the Father and of the Son,' but when the cock clicked, the sound of steps ceased.

' Hullo, Cossacks ! Don't kill your Daddy ! ' calmly said a deep bass voice ; and, moving the reeds apart, Daddy Eroshka came up close to Luke.

' I very nearly killed you, by God I did ! ' said Lukashka.

' What have you shot ? ' asked the old man. His sonorous voice resounded through the wood and downward along the river, suddenly dispelling the mysterious quiet of night around the Cossack. It was as if everything had suddenly become lighter and more distinct.

' There now, Uncle, you have not seen anything,

but I've killed a beast,' said Lukashka, uncocking his gun, and getting up with unnatural calmness.

The old man was staring intently at the white back, now clearly visible, against which rippled the Terek.

'He was swimming with a log on his back. I spied him out! Look there. There! He's got blue trousers, and a gun, I think. . . . Do you see?' inquired Luke.

'How can one help seeing?' said the old man angrily, and a serious and stern expression appeared on his face. 'You've killed a brave,' he said, apparently with regret.

'Well, I sat here, and suddenly saw something dark on the other side. I spied him when he was still over there. It was as if a man had come there and fallen in. Strange! And a piece of driftwood, a good-sized piece, comes floating, not with the stream, but across it; and what do I see but a head appearing from under it! Strange! I stretched out of the reeds, but could see nothing; then I rose, and he must have heard, the beast, and crept out into the shallow and looked about. "No, you don't!" I said, as soon as he landed and looked round, "you'll not get away!" Oh, there was something choking me! I got my gun ready, but did not stir, and looked out. He waited a little and then swam out again; and when he came into the moonlight I could see his whole back. "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" . . . and through the smoke I see him struggling. He moaned, or so it seemed to me. "Ah," I thought, "the Lord be thanked, I've killed him!" And when he drifted on to the sand-bank I could see him distinctly: he tried to get up,

but couldn't. He struggled a bit, and then lay down. Everything could be seen. Look, he does not move—he must be dead! The Cossacks have gone back to the cordon in case there should be any more of them.'

'And so you had him!' said the old man. 'He is far away now, my lad! . . .' And again he shook his head sadly.

Just then the sound reached them of breaking bushes, and the loud voices of Cossacks approaching along the bank on horseback and on foot. 'Are you bringing the skiff?' shouted Lukashka.

'You're a trump, Luke! Lug it to the bank!' shouted one of the Cossacks.

Without waiting for the skiff, Lukashka began to undress, keeping an eye all the while on his prey.

'Wait a bit, Nazarka is bringing the skiff,' shouted the Corporal.

'You fool! Maybe he is alive and only pretending! Take your dagger with you!' shouted another Cossack.

'Get along,' cried Luke, pulling off his trousers. He quickly undressed and, crossing himself, jumped, plunging with a splash into the river. Then with long strokes of his white arms, lifting his back high out of the water and breathing deeply, he swam across the current of the Terek towards the shallows. A crowd of Cossacks stood on the bank, talking loudly. Three horsemen rode off to patrol. The skiff appeared round a bend. Lukashka stood up on the sandbank, leaned over the body, and gave it a couple of shakes. 'Quite dead!' he shouted, in a shrill voice.

The Chechen had been shot in the head. He had on a pair of blue trousers, a shirt, and a Circassian

coat, and a gun and dagger were tied to his back. Above all these a large branch was tied, and that it was which at first had misled Lukashka.

‘What a carp you’ve landed !’ cried one of the Cossacks who had assembled in a circle, as the body, lifted out of the skiff, was laid on the bank, pressing down the grass.

‘How yellow he is !’ said another.

‘Where have our fellows gone to search ? I expect the rest of them are on the other bank. If this one had not been a scout he would not have swum that way. Why else should he swim alone ?’ said a third.

‘Must have been a smart one, to offer himself before the others ; a regular brave !’ said Lukashka mockingly, as he stood shivering at the bottom of the bank, wringing out his wet clothes.

‘His beard is dyed, and cropped.’

‘And he has tied a bag with a coat in it to his back.’

‘That would make it easier for him to swim,’ said someone.

‘I say, Lukashka,’ said the Corporal, who was holding the dagger and gun taken from the dead man. ‘Keep the dagger for yourself and the coat too ; but I’ll give you three rubles for the gun. You see it has a hole in it,’ said he, blowing into the muzzle. ‘I want it just for a souvenir.’

Lukashka did not answer. Evidently this sort of begging vexed him, but he knew it could not be avoided.

‘See, what a devil !’ said he, frowning and throwing down the Chechen’s coat. ‘If at least it were a good coat, but it’s a mere rag.’

‘It’ll do to fetch firewood in,’ said one of the Cossacks.

‘Mosev, I’ll go home,’ said Lukashka, evidently forgetting his vexation and wishing to get some advantage out of having to give a present to his superior.

‘All right, you may go !’

‘Take the body beyond the cordon, lads,’ said the Corporal, still examining the gun, ‘and put a shelter over him from the sun. Perhaps they’ll send from the mountains to ransom it.’

‘It isn’t hot yet,’ said some one.

‘And supposing a jackal tears him ? Would that be well ?’ remarked another Cossack.

‘We’ll set a watch ; for should they come to ransom him, it won’t do for him to have been torn.’

‘Well, Lukashka, whatever you do, you must stand a pail of vodka for the lads,’ said the Corporal gaily.

‘Of course ! That’s the custom,’ chimed in the Cossacks. ‘See what luck God has sent you ! Without ever having seen anything of the kind before, you’ve killed a brave !’

‘Buy the dagger and coat, and don’t be stingy, and I’ll let you have the trousers too,’ said Lukashka. ‘They’re too tight for me ; he was a thin devil.’

One Cossack bought the coat for a ruble, and another gave the price of two pails of vodka for the dagger.

‘Drink, lads ! I’ll stand you a pail !’ said Luke. ‘I’ll bring it myself from the village.’

‘And cut up the trousers into kerchiefs for the girls !’ said Nazarka.

The Cossacks burst out laughing.

‘Have done laughing !’ said the Corporal.
‘And take the body away. Why have you put the nasty thing by the hut ?’

‘What are you standing there for ? Haul him along, lads !’ shouted Lukashka in a commanding voice to the Cossacks, who reluctantly took hold of the body, obeying him as though he were their chief. After dragging the body along for a few steps, the Cossacks let fall the legs, which dropped with a lifeless jerk ; and stepping apart they then stood silent for a few moments. Nazarka came up and straightened the head, which was turned to one side, so that the round wound above the temple and the whole of the dead man’s face were visible.

‘See what a mark he has made, right in the brain,’ he said. ‘He’ll not get lost. His owners will always know him !’

No one answered, and again the Angel of Silence flew over the Cossacks.

The sun had risen high and its diverging beams were lighting up the dewy grass. Near by, the Terek murmured in the awakened wood, and, greeting the morning, the pheasants called to one another. The Cossacks stood still and silent around the dead man, gazing at him. The brown body, with nothing on but the wet blue trousers held by a girdle over the sunken stomach, was well-shaped and handsome. The muscular arms lay stretched straight out by his sides ; the blue, freshly shaven, round head with the clotted wound on one side of it, was thrown back. The smooth tanned forehead contrasted sharply with the shaven part of the head. The open glassy eyes with lowered pupils, stared upwards, seeming to

gaze past everything. Under the red, trimmed moustache, the fine lips, drawn at the corners, seemed stiffened into a smile of good-natured subtle raillery. The fingers of the small hands, covered with red hairs, were bent inward, and the nails were dyed red.

Lukashka had not yet dressed. He was wet. His neck was redder and his eyes brighter than usual; his broad jaws twitched, and from his healthy body a hardly perceptible steam rose in the fresh morning air.

‘He too was a man!’ he muttered, evidently admiring the corpse.

‘Yes, if you had fallen into his hands, you would have had short shrift,’ said one of the Cossacks.

The Angel of Silence had taken wing. The Cossacks began bustling about and talking. Two of them went to cut down bushes for a shelter, others strolled towards the cordon. Luke and Nazarka ran to get ready to go to the village.

Half an hour later Lukashka and Nazarka were on their way homewards, talking incessantly, and almost running through the dense woods which separated the Terek from the village.

‘Mind, don’t tell her I sent you, but just go and find out if her husband is at home,’ Luke was saying in his shrill voice.

‘And I’ll go round to Yamka too,’ said the devoted Nazarka. ‘We’ll have a spree, shall we?’

‘When should we have one, if not to-day?’ replied Luke.

When they reached the village the two Cossacks drank, and lay down to sleep till evening.

CHAPTER X

ON the third day after the events above described, two companies of a Caucasian infantry regiment arrived at the Cossack village of Novomlinsk. The horses had been unharnessed, and the companies' wagons were standing in the square. The cooks had dug a pit and with logs gathered from various yards (where they had not been sufficiently securely stored) were now cooking the food ; the pay-sergeants were settling accounts with the soldiers. The Service Corps men were driving piles in the ground to which to tie the horses ; and the quartermasters were going about the streets just as if they were at home, showing officers and men to their quarters. Here were green ammunition boxes in a line, artillery wagons, horses, and cauldrons in which buckwheat porridge was being cooked.

Here were the Captain and the Lieutenant and the Sergeant-Major, Onisim Mikhaylovich ; and all this was in the Cossack village where it was reported that the companies were ordered to take up their quarters : therefore they were at home here.

But why they were stationed there ; who the Cossacks were ; and whether they wanted the troops to be there ; and whether they were Old Believers¹ or not—was all quite immaterial.

¹ As already mentioned, the Old Believers, among other peculiarities, had a strong religious disapproval of the use of tobacco (' Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man ; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.' Matt. xv, 11). This makes the presence of Russian soldiers, who smoke, particularly objectionable to them.

Having received their pay and been dismissed tired out and covered with dust, the soldiers noisily and in disorder, like a swarm of bees about to settle, spread over the squares and streets.

Quite regardless of the Cossacks' ill-will, chattering merrily, and with their muskets clinking, by twos and threes they entered the huts and hung up their accoutrements, unpacked their bags, and joked with the women. At their favourite spot, round the porridge-cauldrons, a large group of soldiers assembled, and with little pipes between their teeth they gazed, now at the smoke which rose into the hot sky, becoming visible when it thickened into white clouds as it rose, and now at the camp fires which were quivering in the pure air, like molten glass ; and bantered and made fun of the Cossack men and women, because they do not live at all like Russians. In all the yards one could see soldiers and hear their laughter, and the exasperated and shrill cries of Cossack women defending their houses and refusing to give the soldiers water or cooking utensils. Little boys and girls clinging to their mothers and to each other, followed all the movements of the troopers (never before seen by them) with frightened curiosity or ran after them at a respectful distance.

The old Cossacks came out silently and dismally and sat on the earthen embankments of their huts and watched the soldiers' activity with an air of leaving it all to the will of God, without understanding what would come of it.

Olenin, who had joined the Caucasian Army as a cadet three months before, was quartered in one of the best houses in the village, the house of the

Teacher, Elias Vasilich—that is to say in Granny Ulitka's.

‘Goodness knows what it will be like, Dmitry Andreich,’ said the panting Vanyusha to Olenin, who, dressed in a Circassian coat and mounted on a Kabarda¹ horse which he had bought in Groznoe, was, after a five-hours’ march, gaily entering the yard of the quarters assigned to him.

‘Why, what’s the matter?’ he asked, caressing his horse, and looking merrily at the perspiring, dishevelled, and worried Vanyusha, who had arrived with the baggage wagons and was unpacking.

Olenin looked quite a different man. In place of his clean-shaven lips and chin, he had a youthful moustache and a small beard. In place of his sallow complexion, the result of nights turned into day, his cheeks, his forehead, and the skin behind his ears were now red with healthy sunburn. In place of a clean new black suit, he wore a dirty white Circassian coat with a deeply pleated skirt, and he bore arms. Instead of a freshly starched collar, his neck was tightly clasped by the red band of his silk *beshmet*. He wore Circassian dress, but did not wear it well, and any one would have known him for a Russian and not a Tartar-brave. It was the thing—but not the real thing. But for all that, his whole person breathed health, joy, and satisfaction.

‘Yes, it seems funny to you,’ said Vanyusha; ‘but just try to talk to these people yourself: they set themselves against one and there’s an end of it. You can’t get as much as a word out of them.’ Vanyusha angrily threw down a pail on the threshold. ‘Somehow they don’t seem like Russians.’

¹ See note on p. 349.

‘ You should speak to the Chief of the Village ! ’

‘ But I don’t know where he lives,’ said Vanyusha, in an offended tone.

‘ Who has upset you so much ? ’ asked Olenin, looking round.

‘ The devil only knows. Faugh ! There is no real master here. They say he has gone to some kind of *kriga*,¹ and the old woman is a real devil. God preserve us ! ’ answered Vanyusha putting his hands to his head. ‘ How we shall live here, I don’t know. They are worse than Tartars, I do declare—though they consider themselves Christians ! A Tartar is bad enough, but all the same he is more noble. Gone to the *kriga* indeed ! What this *kriga* they have invented is I don’t know ! ’ concluded Vanyusha, and turned aside.

‘ It’s not as it is in the serfs’ quarters at home, eh ? ’ chaffed Olenin without dismounting.

‘ Please sir, may I have your horse ? ’ said Vanyusha, evidently perplexed by this new order of things, but resigning himself to his fate.

‘ So a Tartar is more noble, eh, Vanyusha ? ’ repeated Olenin, dismounting and slapping the saddle.

‘ Yes, you’re laughing ! You think it funny,’ muttered Vanyusha angrily.

‘ Come, don’t be angry, Vanyusha,’ replied Olenin, still smiling. ‘ Wait a minute, I’ll go and speak to the people of the house ; you’ll see I shall arrange everything. You don’t know what a jolly life we shall have here. Only don’t get upset.’

Vanyusha did not answer. Screwing up his eyes, he looked contemptuously after his master,

¹ A *kriga* is a place on the river-bank fenced in for fishing.

and shook his head. Vanyusha regarded Olenin as only his master, and Olenin regarded Vanyusha as only his servant ; and they would both have been much surprised if any one had told them that they were friends, as they really were without knowing it themselves. Vanyusha had been taken into his proprietor's house when he was only eleven, and when Olenin was the same age. When Olenin was fifteen he gave Vanyusha lessons for a time, and taught him to read French, of which the latter was inordinately proud ; and when in specially good spirits he still let off French words, always laughing stupidly when he did so.

Olenin ran up the steps of the porch ; and pushed open the door of the hut. Maryanka, wearing nothing but a pink smock, as all Cossack women do in the house, jumped, frightened, away from the door and pressing herself against the wall covered the lower part of her face with the broad sleeve of her Tartar smock. Having opened the door wider, Olenin, in the semi-darkness of the passage, saw the whole tall, shapely figure of the young Cossack girl. With the quick and eager curiosity of youth, he involuntarily noticed the firm maidenly form revealed by the fine print smock, and the beautiful black eyes fixed on him with childlike terror and wild curiosity.

‘ This is *she*,’ thought Olenin. ‘ But there will be many others like her,’ came at once into his head, and he opened the inner door.

Old Granny Ulitka, also dressed only in a smock, was stooping, with her back turned to him, sweeping the floor.

‘ Good day to you, Mother ! I’ve come about my lodgings,’ he began.

The Cossack woman, without unbending, turned her severe but still handsome face towards him.

‘ What have you come here for? Want to mock at us, eh ? I’ll teach you to mock ; may the black plague seize you ! ’ she shouted, looking askance from under her frowning brow at the newcomer.

Olenin had at first imagined that the wayworn, gallant Caucasian Army (of which he was a member) would be everywhere received joyfully, and especially by the Cossacks, our comrades in the war ; and he therefore felt perplexed by this reception. Without losing presence of mind, however, he tried to explain that he meant to pay for his lodgings, but the old woman would not give him a hearing.

‘ What have you come for ? Who wants a pest like you, with your scraped face ? You just wait a bit ; when the master returns he’ll show you your place. I don’t want your dirty money ! A likely thing—just as if we had never seen any ! You’ll stink the house out with your beastly tobacco, and want to put it right with money ! Think we’ve never seen a pest ! May you be shot in your bowels and your heart ! ’ shrieked the old woman in a piercing voice, interrupting Olenin.

‘ It seems Vanyusha was right ! ’ thought Olenin. ‘ “ A Tartar would be nobler ” , and, followed by Granny Ulitka’s abuse, he went out of the hut. As he was leaving, Maryanka, still wearing only her pink smock, but with her face now hidden right up to her eyes in a white kerchief, suddenly slipped out from the passage past him. Pattering rapidly down the steps with her bare feet, she ran down from the porch, stopped, and, looking round

hastily with laughing eyes at the young man, vanished round the corner of the hut.

Her firm youthful step, the untamed look of the eyes glistening from under the white kerchief, and the firm stately build of the young beauty, struck Olenin even more powerfully than before.

‘Yes, it must be *she*,’ he thought, and troubling his head still less about the lodgings, he kept looking round at Maryanka as he approached Vanyusha.

‘There you see, the girl too is quite savage, just like a wild filly!’ said Vanyusha, who, though still busy with the luggage wagon, had now cheered up a bit. ‘*La fame!*’ he added in a loud triumphant voice, and burst out laughing.

CHAPTER XI

TOWARDS evening the master of the house returned from his fishing, and having learnt that the cadet would pay for the lodging, pacified the old woman and satisfied Vanyusha’s demands.

Everything was settled in the new quarters. Their hosts moved into the winter hut, and let their summer hut to the cadet for three rubles a month. Olenin had something to eat and went to sleep. Towards evening he woke up, washed, and made himself tidy; dined and, having lit a cigarette, sat down by the window that looked on to the street. It was cooler. The slanting shadow of the hut with its ornamental gables fell across the dusty road, and even bent upwards at the base of the wall of the house opposite. The steep reed-thatched roof of that house shone in the rays of the setting sun. The air grew fresher.

Everything was peaceful in the village. The soldiers had settled down and become quiet. The herds had not yet been driven home, and the people had not returned from their work.

Olenin's lodging was situated almost at the end of the village. At rare intervals, from somewhere far beyond the Terek in those parts whence Olenin had just come (the Chechen or the Kumytsk plain), came muffled sounds of firing. Olenin was feeling very well-contented after three months of bivouac life. His newly washed face was fresh and his powerful body clean (an unaccustomed sensation after the campaign) and in all his rested limbs he was conscious of a feeling of tranquillity and strength. His mind, too, felt fresh and clear. He thought of the campaign and of past dangers. He remembered that he had faced them no worse than other men, and that he was accepted as a comrade among valiant Caucasians. His Moscow recollections were left behind, Heaven knows how far ! The old life was wiped out, and a quite new life had begun in which there were, as yet, no mistakes. Here, as a new man among new men, he could gain a new and good reputation. He was conscious of a youthful and unreasoning joy of life. Looking now out of the window at the boys spinning their tops in the shadow of the house, now round his new little lodging, he thought how pleasantly he would settle down to this new Cossack village life. Now and then he glanced at the mountains and the blue sky, and an appreciation of the solemn grandeur of nature mingled with his reminiscences and dreams. His new life had begun, not as he imagined it would when he left Moscow, but unexpectedly well. ' The mountains,

the mountains, the mountains !' they permeated all his thoughts and feelings.

'He's drunk his bitch, and licked the jug ! . . . Daddy Eroshka has drunk his bitch !' suddenly the little Cossacks, who had been spinning their tops under the window, shouted, looking towards the side street.

'He's drunk his bitch, and his dagger !' shouted the boys, crowding together and stepping backwards.

These shouts were addressed to Daddy Eroshka, who, with his gun on his shoulder and some pheasants hanging at his girdle, was returning from his shooting expedition.

'I have done wrong, lads, I have !' he said, vigorously swinging his arms and looking up at the windows on both sides of the street. 'I have drunk the bitch ; it was wrong,' he repeated, evidently vexed, but pretending not to care.

Olenin was surprised by the boys' behaviour towards the old hunter, but was still more struck by the expressive, intelligent face and the powerful build of the man whom they called Daddy Eroshka.

'Here Daddy, here Cossack !' he called. 'Come here !'

The old man looked into the window and stopped.

'Good evening, good man,' he said, lifting his little cap off his cropped head.

'Good evening, good man,' replied Olenin. 'What is it the youngsters are shouting at you ?'

Daddy Eroshka came up to the windows. 'Why, they're teasing the old man. No matter, I like it. Let them joke about their old daddy,' he said with those firm musical intonations with which old and venerable people speak. 'Are you an army commander ?' he added.

‘No, I am a cadet. But where did you kill those pheasants?’ asked Olenin.

‘I dispatched these three hens in the forest,’ answered the old man, turning his broad back towards the window, to show the hen-pheasants, which were hanging with their heads tucked into his belt and staining his coat with blood.

‘Haven’t you seen any?’ he asked. ‘If you like, take a brace! Here you are,’ and he handed two of the pheasants in at the window. ‘Are you a sportsman yourself?’ he asked.

‘I am. During the campaign I killed four, myself.’

‘Four? What a lot!’ said the old man sarcastically. ‘And are you a drinker? Do you drink *chikhir*?’

‘Why not? I like a drink.’

‘Ah, I see you are a trump! We shall be *kunaks*,¹ you and I,’ said Daddy Eroskha.

‘Step in,’ said Olenin. ‘We’ll have a drop of *chikhir*.’

‘I might as well,’ said the old man, ‘but take the pheasants.’ The old man’s face showed that he liked the cadet. He had seen at once that he could get free drinks from him, and that therefore it would be all right to give him a brace of pheasants.

Soon Daddy Eroskha’s figure appeared in the doorway of the hut; and it was only then that Olenin became fully conscious of the enormous size and sturdy build of this man, whose red-brown face, with its perfectly white broad beard, was all furrowed by deep lines produced by age and toil.

¹ *Kunak*, a sworn friend for whose sake no sacrifice is too great.

For an old man, the muscles of his legs, arms, and shoulders were quite exceptionally large and prominent. There were deep scars on his head, under the short-cropped hair. His thick sinewy neck was covered with deep intersecting folds like a bull's. His horny hands were bruised and scratched. He stepped lightly and easily over the threshold, unslung his gun and placed it in a corner, and casting a rapid glance round the room noted the value of the goods and chattels deposited in the hut, and with out-turned toes stepped softly, in his sandals of raw hide, into the middle of the room. He brought with him a penetrating but not unpleasant smell of *chikhir* wine, vodka, gunpowder, and congealed blood.

Daddy Eroshka bowed down before the icons, smoothed his beard, and approaching Olenin, held out his thick brown hand. '*Koshkildy*,' said he ; ' That is Tartar for "Good-day"—"Peace be unto you," it means in their tongue.'

' *Koshkildy*, I know,' answered Olenin, shaking hands.

' Eh, but you don't, you won't know the right order ! Fool ! ' said Daddy Eroshka, shaking his head reproachfully. ' If any one says "*Koshkildy*" to you, you must say "*Allah rasi bo sun*," that is, "God save you." That's the way, my dear fellow, and not "*Koshkildy*." But I'll teach you all about it. We had a fellow, Elias Mosevich here, one of your Russians, he and I were *kunaks*. He was a trump, a drunkard, a thief, a sportsman,—and what a sportsman ! I taught him everything.'

' And what will you teach me ? ' asked Olenin, who was becoming more and more interested in the old man.

‘ I’ll take you hunting, and teach you to fish. I’ll show you Chechens, and find a girl for you, if you like—even that! That’s the sort I am! I’m a wag! ’—and the old man laughed. ‘ I’ll sit down. I’m tired. *Karga?* ’ he added, inquiringly.

‘ And what does “ *Karga* ” mean? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ Why, that means “ All right ” in Georgian. But I say it just so. It is a way I have, it’s my favourite word. *Karga, Karga*. I say it just so ; in fun I mean. Well, lad, won’t you order the *chikhir* ? You’ve got an orderly, haven’t you ? ’

‘ Yes. ’

‘ Hey, Ivan ! ’ shouted the old man. ‘ All your soldiers are Ivans. Is yours Ivan ? ’

‘ True enough, his name is Ivan—Vanyusha.¹ Here Vanyusha ! Please get some *chikhir* from our landlady, and bring it here. ’

‘ Ivan or Vanyusha, that’s all one. Why are all your soldiers Ivans ? Ivan, old fellow, ’ said the old man, ‘ You tell them to give you some from the barrel that they have begun. They have the best *chikhir* in the village. But don’t give more than thirty kopeks for the pint, mind, because that witch would be only too glad. . . . Our people are anathema people ; stupid people, ’ Daddy Eroska continued in a confidential tone after Vanyusha had gone out. ‘ They do not look upon you as on men ; you are worse than a Tartar in their eyes. “ Worldly Russians ” they say. But as for me, though you are a soldier, you are still a man, and have a soul in you. Isn’t that right ? Elias Mosevich was a soldier, yet what a treasure of a man he was ! Isn’t that so, my dear fellow ? That’s why our people don’t like me ; but I don’t

¹ Vanyusha is a diminutive form of ‘ Ivan ’.

care ! I'm a merry fellow, and I like everybody. I'm Eroshka ; yes, my dear fellow.'

And the old Cossack patted the young man affectionately on the shoulder.

CHAPTER XII

VANYUSHA, who meanwhile had finished his housekeeping arrangements and had even got shaved by the company's barber and had pulled his trousers out of his high boots as a sign that the company was stationed in comfortable quarters, was in excellent spirits. He looked attentively, but not benevolently, at Eroshka, as at a wild beast he had never seen before, shook his head at the floor which the old man had dirtied, and, having taken two bottles from under a bench, went to the landlady.

' Good evening, kind people,' he said, having made up his mind to be very gentle. ' My master has sent me to get some *chikhir*, will you draw some for me, good folk ? '

The old woman gave no answer. The girl, who was arranging the kerchief on her head before a little Tartar mirror, looked round at Vanyusha in silence.

' I'll pay money for it, honoured people,' said Vanyusha, jingling the coppers in his pocket. ' Be kind to us and we too will be kind to you,' he added.

' How much ? ' asked the old woman abruptly.

' A pint.'

' Go, my own, draw some for them,' said Granny

Ulitka to her daughter. 'Take it from the cask that's begun, my precious.'

The girl took the keys and a decanter, and went out of the hut with Vanyusha.

'Tell me, who is that young woman?' asked Olenin, pointing to Maryanka who was passing the window. The old man winked, and nudged the young man with his elbow.

'Wait a bit,' said he, and reached out of the window. 'Khm,' he coughed, and bellowed, 'Maryanka dear. Hallo, Maryanka, my girlie, won't you love me, darling? I'm a wag,' he added in a whisper to Olenin. The girl, not turning her head and swinging her arms regularly and vigorously, passed the window with the peculiarly elegant and bold gait of a Cossack woman, and only turned her dark shaded eyes slowly towards the old man.

'Love me, and you'll be happy,' shouted Eroshtka, and, winking, he looked questioningly at the cadet.

'I'm a fine fellow, I'm a wag!' he added. 'She's a regular queen, that girl. Eh?'

'She is lovely,' said Olenin. 'Call her here!'

'No, no,' said the old man. 'For that one, a match is being arranged with Lukashka, Luke, a fine Cossack, a brave, who killed an *abrek* the other day. I'll find you a better one. I'll find you one that will go about clothed in silk and silver. Once I've said it, I'll do it. I'll get you a regular beauty!'

'You, an old man—and say such things,' replied Olenin. 'Why, it's a sin!'

'A sin? Where's the sin?' said the old man emphatically. 'A sin to look at a nice girl? A sin

to have some fun with her ? Or is it a sin to love her ? Is that so in your parts ? . . . No, my dear fellow, it's not a sin, it's salvation ! God made you, and God made the girl too. He made it all ; so it is no sin to look at a nice girl. That's what she was made for; to be loved and to give joy. That's how I judge it, my good fellow.'

Having crossed the yard and entered a cool dark store-room filled with barrels, Maryanka went up to one of them and repeating the usual prayer, plunged a dipper into it. Vanyusha, standing in the doorway, smiled as he looked at her. He thought it awfully funny that she had only a smock on, close-fitting behind and tucked up in front, and still funnier that she wore a necklace of silver coins. He thought this quite un-Russian, and that they would all laugh in the serfs' quarters at home, if they saw a girl like that. '*La fille comme c'est très bien*, for a change,' he thought. 'I'll tell that to my master.'

'What are you standing in the light for, you devil !' the girl suddenly shouted. 'Why don't you hand me the decanter !'

Having filled the decanter with cool red wine, Maryanka handed it to Vanyusha.

'Give the money to Mammy,' she said, pushing away the hand in which he held the money.

Vanyusha laughed. 'Why are you so cross, little dear ?' he said good-naturedly, irresolutely shuffling with his feet while the girl was covering the barrel.

She began to laugh.

'And you ! Are you kind ?'

'We, my master and I, are very kind,' Vanyusha answered decidedly. 'We are so kind, that

wherever we have stayed our hosts were always very grateful. It's because he's a nobleman.'

The girl stood listening.

'And is your master married?' she asked.

'No. The master is young and unmarried, because noble gentlemen can never marry young,' said Vanyusha didactically.

'A likely thing! See what a fed-up buffalo he is, and too young to marry! Is he the chief of you all?' she asked.

'My master is a cadet; that means he's not yet an officer, but he's more important than a general—he's an important man! Because not only our colonel, but the Tsar himself, knows him,' proudly explained Vanyusha. 'We are not like those other beggars of the line regiment, and our papa himself was a Senator. He had more than a thousand serfs, all his own, and they send us a thousand rubles at a time. That's why every one likes us. Another may be a captain, but have no money. What's the use of that?'

'Go, I'll lock up,' said the girl, interrupting him.

Vanyusha brought Olenin the wine, and announced that '*La fille c'est très jolie*,' and, laughing stupidly, at once went out.

CHAPTER XIII

MEANWHILE the tattoo had sounded in the village square. The people had returned from their work. The herd lowed, as in clouds of golden dust it crowded at the village gate. The girls and the women hurried through the streets and yards, turning in their cattle. The sun had quite hidden itself behind the distant snowy peaks. One pale

bluish shadow spread over land and sky. Above the darkened gardens, stars just discernible were kindling, and the sounds were gradually hushed in the village. The cattle having been attended to and left for the night, the women came out and gathered at the corners of the streets and, cracking sunflower seeds with their teeth, settled down on the earthen embankments of the houses. Later on, Maryanka, having finished milking a buffalo and the two cows, also joined one of these groups. The group consisted of several women and girls and one old Cossack man. They were talking about the *abrek* who had been killed. The Cossack was narrating and the women questioning him.

‘I expect he’ll get a handsome reward,’ said one of the women.

‘Of course. It’s said that they’ll send him a cross.’

‘Mosev did try to wrong him. Took the gun away from him; but the authorities at Kizlyar heard of it.’

‘A mean creature that Mosev is! ’

‘They say Lukashka has come home,’ remarked one of the girls.

‘He and Nazarka are merry-making at Yamka’s.’ (Yamka was an unmarried, disreputable Cossack woman who kept an illicit pot-house.) ‘I heard say they had drunk half a pailful.’

‘What luck that snatcher has,’ somebody remarked. ‘A real snatcher. But there’s no denying he’s a fine lad, smart enough for anything, a right-minded lad! His father was just such another, Daddy Kiryak was: he takes after his father. When he was killed the whole village howled. Look, there they are,’ added the

speaker, pointing to the Cossacks who were coming down the street towards them. 'And Ergushov has also managed to come along with them ! The drunkard !'

Lukashka, Nazarka, and Ergushov, having emptied half a pail of vodka, were coming towards the girls. The faces of all three, but especially that of the old Cossack, were redder than usual. Ergushov was reeling, and kept laughing and nudging Nazarka in the ribs.

'Why are you not singing ?' he shouted to the girls. 'Sing to our merry-making, I tell you !'

They were welcomed with the words, 'Had a good day ? Had a good day ?'

'Why sing ? It 's not a holiday,' said one of the women. 'You're tight, so you go and sing.'

Ergushov roared with laughter, and nudged Nazarka. 'You'd better sing. And I'll begin too. I'm clever, I tell you.'

'Are you asleep, fair ones ?' said Nazarka. 'We've come from the cordon to drink your health. We've already drunk Lukashka's health.'

Lukashka, when he reached the group, slowly raised his cap and stopped in front of the girls. His broad cheek-bones and neck were red. He stood and spoke softly and sedately, but in his tranquillity and sedateness there was more of animation and strength than in all Nazarka's loquacity and bustle. He reminded one of a playful colt, that with a snort and a flourish of its tail suddenly stops short and stands as though nailed to the ground with all four feet. Lukashka stood quietly in front of the girls ; his eyes laughed, and he spoke but little as he glanced now at his drunken companions and now at the girls.

When Maryanka joined the group he raised his cap with a firm deliberate movement, moved out of her way, and then stepped in front of her with one foot a little forward and with his thumbs in his belt, fingering his dagger. Maryanka answered his greeting with a leisurely bow of her head, settled down on the earth-bank, and took some seeds out of the bosom of her smock. Lukashka, keeping his eyes fixed on Maryanka, slowly cracked seeds and spat out the shells. All were quiet when Maryanka joined the group.

‘Have you come for long?’ asked a woman, breaking the silence.

‘Till to-morrow morning,’ quietly replied Lukashka.

‘Well, God willing, you’ve got a good chance,’ said the Cossack; ‘I’m glad of it, as I’ve just been saying.’

‘And I say so too,’ put in the tipsy Ergushov, laughing. ‘What a lot of visitors have come,’ he added, pointing to a soldier who was passing by. ‘The soldiers’ vodka is good—I like it.’

‘They’ve sent three of the devils to us,’ said one of the women. ‘Grandad went to the village Elders, but they say nothing can be done.’

‘Ah, ha! Have you met with trouble?’ said Ergushov.

‘I expect they have smoked you out with their tobacco?’ asked another woman. ‘Smoke as much as you like in the yard, I say, but we won’t allow it inside the hut. Not if the Elder himself comes; I won’t allow it. Besides, they may rob you. He’s not quartered any of them on himself, no fear, that devil’s son of an Elder.’

‘You don’t like it?’ Ergushov began again.

‘And I’ve also heard say that the girls will have to make the soldiers’ beds and offer them *chikhir* and honey,’ said Nazarka, putting one foot forward and tilting his cap like Lukashka.

Ergushov burst into a roar of laughter, and seizing the girl nearest to him, he embraced her. ‘I tell you true.’

‘Now then, you black pitch!’ squealed the girl, ‘I’ll tell your old woman.’

‘Tell her,’ shouted he, ‘That’s quite right what Nazarka says; a circular has been sent round. He can read, you know. Quite true!’ And he began embracing the next girl.

‘Where are you getting to, you beast?’ squealed the rosy, round-faced Ustenka, laughing and lifting her arm to hit him.

The Cossack stepped aside, and nearly fell. ‘There, they say girls have no strength, and you nearly killed me.’

‘Get away, you black pitch, what devil has brought you from the cordon?’ said Ustenka, and turning away from him she again burst out laughing. ‘You were asleep and missed the *abrek*, didn’t you? Suppose he had done for you; it would have been all the better.’

‘You’d have howled, I expect,’ said Nazarka, laughing.

‘Howled! A likely thing.’

‘Just look, she doesn’t care. She’d howl, Nazarka, eh? Would she?’ said Ergushov.

Lukashka all this time had stood silently looking at Maryanka. His gaze evidently confused the girl. ‘Well, Maryanka! I hear they’ve quartered one of the chiefs on you?’ he said, drawing nearer.

Maryanka, as was her wont, waited before she

replied, and, slowly raising her eyes, looked at the Cossack. Lukashka's eyes were laughing, as if something special, apart from what was said, was taking place between himself and the girl.

'Yes, it's all right for them, as they have two huts,' replied an old woman on Maryanka's behalf, 'but at Fomushkin's now, they also have one of the chiefs quartered on them, and they say one whole corner is packed full with his things, and the family have nowhere to go. Was such a thing ever heard of, as that they should turn a whole horde loose in the village?' she said. 'And what the plague are they going to do here?'

'I've heard say they'll build a bridge across the Terek,' said one of the girls.

'And I've been told that they will dig a pit to put the girls in, because they don't love the lads,' said Nazarka, approaching Ustenka; and he again made a whimsical gesture which set everybody laughing, and Ergushov, passing by Maryanka, who was next in turn, began to embrace an old woman.

'Why don't you hug Maryanka? You should do it to each in turn,' said Nazarka.

'No, my old one is sweeter,' shouted the Cossack, kissing the struggling old woman.

'You'll throttle me,' she screamed, laughing.

The tramp of regular footsteps at the other end of the street interrupted their laughter. Three soldiers in their cloaks, with their muskets on their shoulders, were marching in step to relieve guard by the ammunition wagon.

The Corporal, an old cavalry man, looked angrily at the Cossacks and led his men straight along the road where Lukashka and Nazarka were

standing, so that they should have to get out of the way. Nazarka moved, but Lukashka only screwed up his eyes and turned his broad back, without moving from his place. 'People are standing here, so you go round,' he muttered, only half turning his head and tossing it contemptuously in the direction of the soldiers. The soldiers passed by in silence, keeping step regularly along the dusty road. Maryanka began laughing, and all the other girls chimed in.

'What swells!' said Nazarka, 'Just like long-skirted choristers,' and he walked a few steps down the road, imitating the soldiers. Again every one broke into peals of laughter.

Lukashka slowly came up to Maryanka. 'And where have you put up the chief?' he asked.

Maryanka thought for a moment. 'We've let him have the new hut,' she said.

'And is he old or young?' asked Lukashka, sitting down beside her.

'Do you think I've asked?' answered the girl. 'I went to get him some *chikhir*, and saw him sitting by the window with Daddy Eroshka. Red-headed he seemed. They've brought a whole cart-load of things;' and she dropped her eyes.

'Oh, how glad I am that I got leave from the cordon!' said Lukashka, moving closer to the girl, and looking straight in her eyes all the time.

'And have you come for long?' asked Maryanka, smiling slightly.

'Till the morning. Give me some seeds,' he said, holding out his hand.

Maryanka now smiled outright, and unfastening the neckband of her smock, said, 'Don't take them all.'

‘Really, I felt so dull all the time without you, I swear I did,’ he said in a restrained, calm whisper, helping himself to some seeds out of the bosom of the girl’s smock ; and stooping still closer over her, he continued with laughing eyes to talk to her in low tones.

‘I won’t come. I tell you,’ Maryanka suddenly said aloud, leaning away from him.

‘No really . . . what I wanted to say to you,’ . . . whispered Lukashka. ‘By the Heavens! Do come !’

Maryanka shook her head, but did so with a smile.

‘Nursey Maryanka ! Hallo Nursey ! Mammy is calling ! Supper time !’ shouted Maryanka’s little brother, running towards the group.

‘I’m coming,’ replied the girl, ‘Go, my dear, go alone—I’ll come in a minute.’

Lukashka rose and raised his cap.

‘I expect I had better go home too, that will be best,’ he said, trying to appear unconcerned but hardly able to repress a smile, and he disappeared behind the corner of the house.

Meanwhile, night had entirely enveloped the village. Bright stars were scattered over the dark sky. The streets became dark and empty. Nazarka remained with the women on the earth-bank, and their laughter was still heard, but Lukashka, having slowly moved away from the girls, crouched down like a cat and then suddenly started running lightly, holding his dagger to steady it : not homeward, however, but towards the Teacher’s house. Having passed two streets he turned into a lane, and lifting the skirt of his coat he sat down on the ground in the shadow

of a fence. 'A regular Teacher's daughter!' he thought about Maryanka. 'Won't even have a lark—the devil! But just wait a bit.'

The approaching footsteps of a woman attracted his attention. He began listening, and laughed all by himself.

Maryanka with bowed head, striking the pales of the fences with a switch, was walking with rapid regular strides straight towards him. Lukashka rose. Maryanka started and stopped.

'What an accursed devil! You frightened me! So you have not gone home?' she said, and laughed aloud.

Lukashka put one arm round her and with the other hand raised her face. 'What I wanted to tell you, by Heaven!' his voice trembled and broke.

'What are you talking of, at night time?' answered Maryanka. 'Mammy is waiting for me, and you'd better go to your sweetheart.' And, freeing herself from his arms, she ran away a few steps. When she had reached the wattle fence of her home, she stopped and turned to the Cossack, who was running beside her and still trying to persuade her to stay a while with him.

'Well, what do you want to say, midnight-gad-about?' and she again began laughing.

'Don't laugh at me, Maryanka! By the Heaven! Well, what if I have a sweetheart? May the devil take her! Only say the word and now I'll love you—I'll do anything you wish. Here they are!' and he jingled the money in his pocket. 'Now we can live splendidly. Others have pleasures, and I? I get no pleasure from you, Maryanka dear!'

The girl did not answer. She stood before him,

breaking her switch into little bits with a rapid movement of her fingers.

Lukashka suddenly clenched his teeth and fists.

'And why keep waiting and waiting ! Don't I love you, darling ! You can do what you like with me,' said he suddenly, frowning angrily and seizing both her hands.

The calm expression of Maryanka's face and voice did not change.

'Don't bluster, Lukashka, but listen to me,' she answered, not pulling away her hands, but holding the Cossack at arm's length. 'It's true I am a girl, but you listen to me ! It does not depend on me, but if you love me I'll tell you this. Let go my hands, I'll tell you without.—I'll marry you, but you'll never get any nonsense from me,' said Maryanka without turning her face.

'What, you'll marry me ? Marriage does not depend on us. Love me yourself, Maryanka dear,' said Lukashka, from sullen and furious becoming again gentle, submissive, and tender, and smiling as he looked closely into her eyes. Maryanka clung to him and kissed him firmly on the lips. 'Brother dear !' she whispered, pressing him convulsively to her. Then, suddenly tearing herself away, she ran into the gate of her house without looking round.

In spite of the Cossack's entreaties to wait another minute to hear what he had to say, Maryanka did not stop.

'Go,' she cried, 'you'll be seen ! I do believe that devil, our lodger, is walking about the yard.'

'Teacher's daughter,' thought Lukashka, 'She will marry me. Marriage is all very well, but you just love me !'

He found Nazarka at Yamka's house, and after

having a spree with him, went to Dunayka's house, where, in spite of her not being faithful to him, he spent the night.

CHAPTER XIV

It was quite true that Olenin had been walking about the yard when Maryanka entered the gate, and had heard her say, 'That devil, our lodger, is walking about.' He had spent that evening with Daddy Eroshka in the porch of his new lodging. He had had a table, a samovar, wine and a lighted candle, brought out, and over a cup of tea he listened to the tales the old man told seated on the threshold at his feet. Though the air was still, the candle dripped and flickered: now lighting up the post of the porch, now the table and crockery, now the cropped white head of the old man. Moths circled round the flame and, shedding the dust of their wings, fluttered on the table and in the glasses, flew into the candle flame, and disappeared in the black space beyond. Olenin and Eroshka had emptied five bottles of *chikhir*. Eroshka filled the glasses every time, offering one to Olenin, drinking his health, and talking untiringly. He told of Cossack life in the old days; of his father, 'The Blood,' who alone had carried on his back a boar's carcass weighing three hundredweight, and drank two pails of *chikhir* at one sitting. He told of his own days and his chum Girchik, with whom, during the plague, he used to smuggle felt cloaks across the Terek. He told how one morning he had killed two deer, and about his 'little soul' who used to run to him at the cordon at night. He told all this so eloquently and picturesquely that Olenin

did not notice how time passed. ‘ Ah, yes, my dear fellow, you did not know me in my golden days ; then I’d have shown you things. To-day it’s “ Eroshka licks the jug ”, but then Eroshka was famous in the whole regiment. Whose was the finest horse ? Who had a Gurda¹ sword ? To whom should one go to get a drink ? With whom go on the spree ? Who should be sent to the mountains to kill Ahmet Khan ? Why, always Eroshka ! Whom did the girls love ? Always Eroshka had to answer for it. Because I was a real brave ; a drinker ; a thief (I used to seize herds of horses in the mountains) ; a singer ; I was a master of every art ! There are no Cossacks like that nowadays. It’s disgusting to look at them. When they’re that high (Eroshka held his hand three feet from the ground) they put on idiotic boots and keep looking at them—that’s all the pleasure they know. Or they’ll drink themselves foolish, not like men, but all wrong. And who was I ? I was Eroshka, the thief ; they knew me not only in this village, but up in the mountains. Tartar princes, my *kunaks*, used to come to see me ! I used to be everybody’s *kunak*. If he was a Tartar—with a Tartar ; an Armenian—with an Armenian ; a soldier—with a soldier ; an officer—with an officer ! I didn’t care, as long as he was a drinker. He says you should cleanse yourself from intercourse with the world : not drink with soldiers, not eat with a Tartar.’

‘ Who says all that ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ Why, our teacher ! But listen to a Mullah or a Tartar Cadi. He says, “ You unbelieving Giaours,

¹ The swords and daggers most highly valued in the Caucasus are called by the name of the maker—Gurda.

why do you eat pig ? ” That shows that every one has his own law. But I think it ’s all one. God has made everything for the joy of man. There is no sin in any of it.’

‘ Take example from an animal. It lives in the Tartar’s reeds, or in ours. Wherever it happens to go, there is its home ! Whatever God gives it, that it eats ! But our people say we have to lick red-hot plates in hell, for that. And I think it is all a fraud,’ he added after a pause.

‘ What is a fraud ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ Why, what the preachers say. We had an army captain in Chervlena who was my *kunak* : a fine fellow, just like me. He was killed in Chechnya. Well, he used to say that the preachers invent all that out of their own heads. “ When you die the grass will grow on your grave, and that’s all ! ” ’ The old man laughed. ‘ He was a desperate fellow.’

‘ And how old are you ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ The Lord only knows ! I must be about seventy. When a Tsaritsa reigned in Russia¹ I was no longer very little. So you can reckon it out. I must be seventy.’

‘ Yes, you must, but you are still a fine fellow.’

‘ Well, thank Heaven, I am healthy, quite healthy, except that a woman, a witch, has harmed me. . . .’

‘ How ? ’

‘ Oh, just harmed me.’

‘ And so when you die, the grass will grow ? ’ repeated Olenin.

Eroshka evidently did not wish to express his thought clearly. He was silent for a while. ‘ And what did you think ? Drink ! ’ he shouted suddenly, smiling and handing Olenin some wine.

¹ Catherine the Great died in 1799.

CHAPTER XV

‘ WELL, what was I saying ? ’ he continued, trying to remember. ‘ Yes, that’s the sort of man I am. I am a hunter. There is no hunter to equal me in the regiment. I will find and show you any animal, and any bird, and what, and where. I know it all ! I have dogs, and two guns and nets, and a screen and a hawk. I have everything, thank the Lord ! If you are not bragging but are a real sportsman, I’ll show you everything. Do you know what a man I am ! When I have found a track—I know the animal. I know where he will lie down, and where he’ll drink or roll about. I make myself a perch and sit there all night, watching. What’s the good of staying at home ! One only gets into mischief, gets drunk. And here women come and chatter, and boys shout at me : enough to drive one mad.

‘ It’s a different matter when you go out at nightfall, choose yourself a place, press down the reeds and sit there and sit, waiting, like a jolly fellow. One knows everything that goes on in the woods. One looks up at the sky : the stars move, you look at them and find out from them how the time goes. One looks round—the wood is rustling ; one goes on waiting, now, there comes a crackling—a boar comes to rub himself ; one listens to hear the young eaglets screech, and then the cocks give voice in the village, or the geese. When you hear the geese, you know it is not yet midnight. And I know all about it ! Or when a gun is fired, somewhere far away, thoughts come to one. One thinks, who is that firing ? Is it another Cossack

like myself, who has been watching for some animal ? And has he killed it ? Or only wounded it, so that now the poor dear goes through the reeds smearing them with its blood all for nothing ? I don't like that ! Oh, how I dislike it ! Why injure a beast ? You fool, you fool ! Or one thinks, " Maybe an *abrek* has killed some silly little Cossack." All this passes through one's mind. And once as I sat watching by the river, I saw a cradle floating down. It was sound, except for one corner which was broken off. Thoughts did come that time ! I thought, some of your soldiers, the devils, must have got into a Tartar village and seized the Chechen women ; and one of the devils has killed the little one : taken it by its legs, and hit its head against a wall. Don't they do such things ? Sh ! Men have no souls ! And thoughts came to me that filled me with pity. I thought : they've thrown away the cradle and driven the wife out, and her brave has taken his gun and come across to our side to rob us. One watches and thinks. And when one hears a litter breaking through the thicket, something begins to knock inside one. Dear one, come this way ! "They'll scent me," one thinks ; and one sits and does not stir, while one's heart goes dun ! dun ! dun ! and simply lifts you. Once this spring a fine litter came near me, I saw something black. "In the name of the Father and of the Son," and I was just about to fire when she grunts to her pigs: "Danger, children," she says, "there's a man here," and off they all ran, breaking through the bushes. I felt I should like to get my teeth into her.'

'How could a sow tell her brood that a man was there ?' asked Olenin.

‘ What do you think ? You think, the beast’s a fool ? No, he is wiser than a man, though you do call him a pig ! He knows everything.

‘ Take this, for instance. A man will pass along your track, and not notice it ; but a pig as soon as it gets on to your track, turns and runs at once : that shows there is wisdom in him, since he scents your smell, and you don’t. And there is this to be said too : you wish to kill it, and it wishes to go about the woods alive. You have one law, and it has another. It is a pig, but it is no worse than you—it too is God’s creature. Ah, dear ! Man is foolish, foolish, foolish ! ’ The old man repeated this several times, and then letting his head drop, he sat thinking.

Olenin also became thoughtful, and descending from the porch, with his hands behind his back began pacing up and down the yard.

Eroshka, rousing himself, raised his head and began gazing intently at the moths circling round the flickering flame of the candle and burning themselves in it.

‘ Fool, fool ! ’ he said. ‘ Where are you flying to ? Fool, fool ! ’ He rose and with his thick fingers began to drive away the moths.

‘ You’ll burn, little fool ! Fly this way, there’s plenty of room.’ He spoke tenderly, trying to catch them with his thick fingers delicately by their wings, and then letting them fly again. ‘ You are killing yourself, and I am sorry for you ! ’

He sat a long time, chattering, and sipping out of the bottle. Olenin paced up and down the yard. Suddenly he was struck by the sound of whispering outside the gate. Involuntarily holding his breath, he heard a woman’s laughter, a man’s

voice, and the sound of a kiss. Intentionally rustling the grass under his feet, he crossed to the opposite side of the yard ; but after a while the wattle fence creaked. A Cossack in a dark Circassian coat and a white sheepskin cap passed along the other side of the fence (it was Luke), and a tall woman with a white kerchief on her head went past Olenin. 'I and you have nothing to do with one another' was what Maryanka's firm step gave him to understand. He followed her with his eyes to the porch of the hut, and he even saw her, through the window, take off her kerchief and sit down. And suddenly a feeling of lonely depression, and some vague longings and hopes, and envy of some one or other, overcame the young man's soul.

The last lights had been put out in the huts. The last sounds had died away in the village. The wattle fences and the cattle gleaming white in the yards, the roofs of the houses and the stately poplars, all seemed to be sleeping the labourers' healthy peaceful sleep. Only the incessant ringing voices of frogs from the damp distance reached the young man. In the east the stars were growing fewer and seemed to be melting in the increasing light ; but overhead they were denser and deeper than before. The old man was dozing with his head on his hand. A cock crowed in the yard opposite, but Olenin still paced the yard, thinking of something. The sound of a song sung by several voices reached him, and he stepped up to the fence and listened. The voices of several young Cossacks caroled a merry song, and one voice was distinguishable among them all by its firm strength.

‘ Do you know who is singing there ? ’ said the old man, rousing himself. ‘ It is the brave Lukashka. He has killed a Chechen, and now he rejoices. And what is there to rejoice at ? . . . The fool, the fool ! ’

‘ And have you ever killed people ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ You devil ! ’ shouted the old man. ‘ What are you asking ? One must not talk so. It is a serious thing to destroy a human being. . . . Ah, a very serious thing ! Good-bye, my dear fellow. I’ve eaten my fill and am drunk,’ he said, rising. ‘ Shall I come to-morrow, to go shooting ? ’

‘ Yes, come ! ’

‘ Mind, get up early ; if you oversleep you will be fined ! ’

‘ Never fear, I’ll be up before you,’ answered Olenin.

The old man left. The song ceased, but one could hear footsteps and merry talk. A little later the singing broke out again, but farther away, and Eroshka’s loud voice chimed in with the other.

‘ What people, what a life ! ’ thought Olenin with a sigh, as he returned alone to his hut.

CHAPTER XVI

DADDY EROSHKA was a superannuated and solitary Cossack : twenty years ago his wife went over to the Orthodox Church, and ran away from him and married a Russian sergeant-major, and he had no children. He was not bragging when he spoke of himself as having been the boldest dare-

devil in the village when he was young. Everybody in the regiment knew of his old-time prowess. The death of more than one Russian, as well as Chechen, lay on his conscience. He used to go plundering in the mountains, and robbed the Russians too ; and he had twice been in prison. The greater part of his life was spent in the forests, hunting. There he lived for days on a crust of bread and drank nothing but water. But, on the other hand, when he was in the village he made merry from morning to night. After leaving Olenin he slept for a couple of hours and awoke before it was light. He lay on his bed thinking of the man he had become acquainted with the evening before. Olenin's 'simplicity' (simplicity in the sense of not grudging him a drink) pleased him very much, and so did Olenin himself. He wondered why the Russians were all 'simple' and so rich, and why they knew nothing and yet were educated. He pondered on these questions, and also considered what he might get out of Olenin.

Daddy Eroshka's hut was of a good size and not old, but the absence of a woman was very noticeable in it. Contrary to the usual cleanliness of the Cossacks, the whole of this hut was filthy and exceedingly untidy. A blood-stained coat had been thrown on to the table ; half a dough-cake lay beside a plucked and mangled crow with which to feed the hawk. Sandals of raw hide, a gun, a dagger, a little bag, wet clothes and sundry rags lay scattered on the benches. In a corner stood a tub with stinking water, in which another pair of sandals were being steeped ; and near by was a gun and a hunting-screen. On the floor a net had been thrown down and several dead pheasants

lay there, while a hen tied by its leg was walking about near the table pecking among the dirt. In the unheated oven stood a broken pot with some kind of milky liquid. On the top of the oven a falcon was screeching and trying to break the cord by which it was tied, and a moulting hawk sat quietly on the edge of the oven, looking askance at the hen and occasionally bowing its head to right and left.

Daddy Eroshka, in his shirt, was lying prone on a short bed rigged up between the wall and the oven, with his strong legs raised and his feet on the oven. He was picking with his thick fingers at the scratches left on his hands by the hawk, which he was accustomed to carry without wearing gloves. The whole room, especially near the old man, was filled with that strong but not unpleasant mixture of smells that he always carried about with him.

‘Uyde-ma, Daddy ?’ (Is Daddy in ?) through the window came a sharp voice, which he at once recognized as Lukashka’s. ‘Uyde, Uyde, Uyde.’

‘I am in !’ shouted the old man. ‘Come in, neighbour Mark, Luke Mark. Come to see Daddy ? On your way to the cordon ?’

The hawk, at the sound of his master’s shout, flapped his wings and pulled at his cord.

The old man was fond of Lukashka, who was the only man he excepted from his general contempt for the younger generation of Cossacks. Besides which, Lukashka and his mother, as near neighbours, often gave the old man wine, clotted cream, and other home produce which Eroshka did not possess. Daddy Eroshka, who all his life had allowed himself to get carried away, always

explained his infatuations from a practical point of view. 'Well, why not?' he used to say to himself. 'I'll give them some fresh meat, or a bird, and they won't forget Daddy: they'll sometimes bring a cake or a piece of pie.'

'Good morning, Mark! I am glad to see you,' shouted the old man cheerfully, and, quickly putting down his bare feet, he jumped off his bed and walked a step or two along the creaking floor, looked down at his out-turned toes, and suddenly, amused by the appearance of his feet, he smiled, stamped with his bare heel on the ground, stamped again, and then performed a funny dance-step.

'That was clever, eh?' he asked, his small eyes glistening.

Lukashka smiled faintly.

'Going back to the cordon?' asked the old man.

'I have brought the *chikhir* I promised you when we were at the cordon.'

'May Christ save you!' said the old man, who took up the extremely wide trousers that were lying on the floor and his *beshmet*, put them on, fastened a strap round his waist, poured some water over his hands from an earthenware pot, wiped them on the old trousers, smoothed his beard with a bit of comb, and stopped in front of Lukashka.

'Ready,' he said.

Lukashka fetched a cup, wiped it, and filled it with wine, and then handed it to the old man.

'Your health! To the Father and the Son!' said the old man, accepting the wine with solemnity. 'May you have what you desire, may you always be a hero, and receive the cross.'

Lukashka also drank a little, after repeating a prayer, and then put the wine on the table.

The old man rose and brought out some dried fish which he laid on the threshold, where he beat it with a stick to make it tender ; then, having put it with his horny hands on a blue plate (his only one), he placed it on the table.

‘ I have all I want. I have victuals, thank God ! ’ he said proudly. ‘ Well, and what of Mosev ? ’ he added.

Lukashka, evidently wishing to know the old man’s opinion, told him how the officer had taken the gun from him. ‘ Never mind the gun,’ said the old man. ‘ If you don’t give away the gun, you will get no reward.’

‘ But they say, Daddy, it’s little reward a fellow gets when he is not yet a mounted Cossack ; and the gun is a fine one, worth eighty rubles.’

‘ Eh, let it go ! I had a dispute like that with an officer : he wanted my horse. “ Give it me and you’ll be made a Teacher ”, says he. I wouldn’t, and I got nothing ! ’

‘ Yes, Daddy, but you see I have to buy a horse ; and they say you can’t get one the other side of the river under fifty rubles, and mother has not yet sold our wine.’

‘ Eh, we didn’t bother,’ said the old man ; ‘ when Daddy Eroshka was your age, he already stole herds of horses from the Nogay folk, and drove them across the Terek. Sometimes we’d give a fine horse for a quart of vodka or a cloak.’

‘ Why so cheap ? ’ asked Lukashka.

‘ You’re a fool, a fool, Mark,’ said the old man contemptuously. ‘ Why, that’s what one steals for, so as not to be stingy ! As for you, I suppose

you have not so much as seen how one drives off a herd of horses ? Why don't you speak ?'

' What's one to say, Daddy ? ' replied Lukashka. ' It seems we are not the same sort of men as you were.'

' You're a fool ! Mark, a fool ! not the same sort of men ! ' retorted the old man, mimicking the Cossack lad. ' I was not that sort of Cossack at your age.'

' How's that ? ' asked Lukashka.

The old man shook his head contemptuously. ' Daddy Eroska was *simple* ; he did not grudge anything ! That's why I was *kunak* with all Chechnya. A *kunak* would come to visit me, and I'd make him drunk with vodka and make him happy, and put him to sleep with me ; and when I went to see him I'd take him a present—a dagger ! That's the way it is done, and not as you do nowadays : the only amusement lads have now is to crack seeds and spit out the shells ! ' The old man finished contemptuously, imitating the present-day Cossacks cracking seeds and spitting out the shells.

' Yes, I know,' said Lukashka ; ' that's so ! '

' If you wish to be a fellow of the right sort, be a brave, and not a peasant ! Because even a peasant can buy a horse,—pay the money and take the horse.'

They were silent for a while.

' Well, of course it is dull both in the village and the cordon, Daddy : but there's nowhere one can go for a bit of sport. All our fellows are so timid. Take Nazarka. The other day when we went to the Tartar village, Girey Khan asked us to come to Nogay to take some horses, but no one went ; and how was I to go alone ? '

‘ And what of Daddy ? Do you think I am quite dried up ? . . . No, I’m not dried up. Let me have a horse, and I’ll be off to Nogay at once.’

‘ What’s the good of talking nonsense ! ’ said Luke. ‘ You’d better tell me what to do about Girey Khan. He says, “Only bring horses to the Terek, and then even if you bring a whole stud, I’ll find a place for them.” You see, he’s also a shaven-headed Tartar,—how’s one to believe him ? ’

‘ You may trust Girey Khan, all his kin were good people. His father too was a faithful *kunak*. But listen to Daddy and I won’t teach you wrong : make him take an oath, then it will be all right. And if you go with him, have your pistol ready all the same ; especially when it comes to dividing up the horses. I was nearly killed that way once by a Chechen. I wanted ten rubles from him for a horse. Trusting is all right, but don’t go to sleep without a gun.’

Lukashka listened attentively to the old man.

‘ I say, Daddy, have you any stone-break grass ? ’ he asked after a pause.

‘ I have none, but I’ll teach you how to get it. You’re a good lad, and won’t forget the old man. . . . Shall I tell you ? ’

‘ Tell me, Daddy.’

‘ You know a tortoise ? She’s a devil, the tortoise is ! ’

‘ Of course I know ! ’

‘ Find her nest and fence it round, so that she can’t get in. Well, she’ll come, go round it, and will then go off to find the stone-break grass, and will bring some along and destroy the fence. Anyhow, next morning come in good time, and where

the fence is broken, there you'll find the stone-break grass lying. Take it wherever you like. No lock and no bar will be able to stop you.'

'Have you tried it yourself, Daddy ?'

'As for trying, I have not tried it, but I was told of it by good people. I used only one charm : that was to repeat the "Hail Rhyme" when mounting my horse ; and no one ever killed me !'

'What is the "Hail Rhyme," Daddy ?'

'What, don't you know it ? Oh, what people ! You're right to ask Daddy. Well, listen, and repeat after me :

'Hail ! Ye, living in Sion,
This is your King,
Our steeds we shall sit on,
Sophonia is weeping.
Zacharias is speaking,
Father Mandrych,
Mankind ever loving.'

'Kind ever loving,' the old man repeated. 'Do you know it now ? Try it.'

Lukashka laughed.

'Come, Daddy, was it that that hindered their killing you ? Maybe it just happened so !'

'You've grown too clever ! You learn it all, and say it. It will do you no harm. Well, suppose you have sung "Mandrych", it's all right,' and the old man himself began laughing.

'But just one thing ! Luke, don't you go to Nogay !'

'Why ?'

'Times have changed. You are not the same men. You've become rubbishy Cossacks ! And see how many Russians have come down on us ! You'd get to prison. Really, give it up ! Just as

if you could ! Now Girchik and I, we used . . . ' And the old man was about to begin one of his unending tales, but Lukashka glanced at the window and interrupted him.

' It is quite light, Daddy. It 's time to be off. Look us up, some day.'

' May Christ save you ! I 'll go to the army man ; I promised to take him out shooting. He seems a good fellow.'

CHAPTER XVII

FROM EROSHKA 'S HUT Lukashka went home. As he returned, the dewy mists were rising from the ground and enveloped the village. Though the cattle were out of sight, you could hear them on all sides beginning to stir. The cocks called to one another with increasing frequency and insistence. The air was becoming more transparent, and the villagers were getting up. Not till he was close to it, could Lukashka discern the fence of his yard, all wet with dew, the porch of the hut and the open shed. From the misty yard he heard the sound of an axe chopping wood. Lukashka entered the hut. His mother was up, and stood at the oven, throwing wood into it. His little sister was still lying in bed asleep.

' Well, Lukashka, had enough holiday-making ? ' softly asked his mother. ' Where did you spend the night ? '

' I was in the village,' reluctantly replied her son, reaching for his musket, which he drew from its cover and examined carefully.

His mother shook her head.

Lukashka poured a little gunpowder on to the pan, took out a little bag from which he drew some empty cartridge cases which he began filling, carefully plugging each one with a ball wrapped in a rag. Then, having tested the loaded cartridges with his teeth and examined them, he put down the bag.

‘I say, Mother, I told you my socks wanted mending; have they been done?’ he asked.

‘Oh yes, our dumb girl was mending something last night. Why, is it time for you to be going back to the cordon? I haven’t seen anything of you!’

‘Yes, as soon as I have got ready I shall have to go,’ answered Lukashka, tying up the gunpowder.

‘And where is our dumb one? Outside?’

‘Chopping wood, I expect. She kept fretting for you. “I shall not see him at all!” she said. She puts her hand to her face like this, and clicks her tongue, and presses her hands to her heart, as much as to say—“sorry.” Shall I call her in? She understood all about the *abreck*.’

‘Call her,’ said Lukashka. ‘And I had some tallow there; bring it: I must grease my sword.’

The old woman went out, and a few minutes later Lukashka’s dumb sister came up the creaking steps and entered the hut. She was six years older than her brother, and would have been extremely like him, had it not been for the dull and coarsely changeable expression (common to all deaf and dumb people) of her face.

She wore a coarse smock all patched; her feet were bare and muddy, and on her head she had an old blue kerchief. Her neck, arms, and face were sinewy like a peasant’s. Her clothing and her

whole appearance indicated that she always did the hard work of a man.

She brought in a heap of logs, which she threw down by the oven. Then she went up to her brother, and with a joyful smile which made her whole face pucker up, touched him on the shoulder and began making rapid signs to him with her hands, her face, and whole body.

‘That’s right, that’s right, Stepka is a trump !’ answered the brother, nodding. ‘She’s fetched everything, and mended everything, she’s a trump ! Here, take this for it !’ He brought out two pieces of gingerbread from his pocket and gave them to her.

The dumb woman’s face flushed with pleasure, and she began making a weird noise for joy. Having seized the gingerbread, she began to gesticulate still more rapidly, frequently pointing in one direction, and passing her thick finger over her eyebrows and her face. Lukashka understood her, and kept nodding, while he smiled slightly. She was telling him to give the girls dainties, and that the girls liked him, and that one girl, Maryanka—the best of them all—loved him. She indicated Maryanka by rapidly pointing in the direction of Maryanka’s home and to her own eyebrows and face, and by smacking her lips and shaking her head. ‘Loves’ she expressed by pressing her hands to her breast, kissing her hand, and pretending to embrace some one. Their mother returned to the hut, and seeing what her dumb daughter was saying, smiled and shook her head. Her daughter showed her the gingerbread, and again made the noise which expressed joy.

‘ I told Ulitka the other day that I’d send a match-maker to them,’ said the mother. ‘ She took my words well.’

Lukashka looked silently at his mother. ‘ But how about selling the wine, mother? I need a horse.’

‘ I’ll cart it when I have time. I must get the barrels ready,’ said the mother, evidently not wishing her son to meddle in domestic matters. ‘ When you go out, you’ll find a bag in the passage. I borrowed it from the neighbours, and got something for you to take back to the cordon; or shall I put it in your sack?’

‘ All right,’ answered Lukashka. ‘ And if Girey Khan should come across the river, send him to me at the cordon, for I shall not get leave again for a long time now; I have some business with him.’

He began to get ready to start.

‘ I will send him on,’ said the old woman. ‘ It seems you have been spreeing at Yamka’s all the time. I went out in the night to see to the cattle, and I think it was your voice I heard singing songs.’

Lukashka did not reply, but went out into the passage, threw his bags over his shoulder, tucked up the skirts of his coat, took his musket, and then stopped for a moment on the threshold.

‘ Good-bye, mother! ’ he said as he closed the gate behind him. ‘ Send me a small barrel with Nazarka. I promised it to the lads, and he’ll call for it.’

‘ May Christ keep you, Lukashka. God be with you! I’ll send you some, some from the new barrel,’ said the old woman, going to the fence: ‘ But listen,’ she added, leaning over the fence.

The Cossack stopped.

‘You’ve been making merry here ; well, that’s all right. Why should not a young man amuse himself ? God has sent you luck, and that’s good. But now look out and mind, my son. Don’t you go and get into mischief. Above all, honour your superiors: one has to ! And I will sell the wine and find money for a horse, and will arrange a match with the girl for you.’

‘All right, all right !’ answered her son, frowning.

His deaf sister shouted to attract his attention. She pointed to her head and the palm of her hand, to indicate the shaved head of a Chechen. Then she frowned and pretending to aim with a gun, she shrieked and began rapidly humming and shaking her head. This meant that Lukashka should kill another Chechen.

Lukashka understood. He smiled, and shifting the gun at his back under his cloak, stepped lightly and rapidly, and soon disappeared in the thick mist.

Silently the old woman, having stood a little while at the gate, returned to the hut and immediately began working.

CHAPTER XVIII

LUKASHKA returned to the cordon, and at the same time Daddy Eroshka whistled to his dogs and, climbing over his wattle fence, went to Olenin’s lodging, passing by the back of the houses (he disliked meeting women before going out hunting or shooting).

He found Olenin still asleep, and even Vanyusha, though awake, was still in bed and was looking

round the room, considering whether it was not time to get up, when Daddy Eroshka, gun on shoulder and in full hunter's trappings, opened the door. 'A cudgel!' he shouted in his deep voice, 'An alarm! The Chechens are upon us! Ivan! Get the samovar ready for your master; and get up yourself—quick!' cried the old man. 'That's our way, my good man! Why, even the girls are already up! Look out of the window. See, she's going for water, and you're still sleeping!'

Olenin awoke and jumped up, feeling fresh and light-hearted at the sight of the old man and at the sound of his voice. 'Quick, Vanyusha, quick!' he cried.

'Is that the way you go hunting?' said the old man. 'Others are having their breakfast, and you are asleep! Lyam! Here!' he called to his dog.

'Is your gun ready?' he shouted, as loud as if a whole crowd were in the hut.

'Well, it's true I'm guilty, but it can't be helped! The powder, Vanyusha, and the wads!' said Olenin.

'A fine!' shouted the old man.

'*Du tay voulay vou?*' asked Vanyusha, grinning.

'You're not one of us, your gabble is not like our speech, you devil!' the old man shouted at Vanyusha, showing the stumps at his teeth.

'A first offence must be forgiven,' said Olenin playfully, drawing on his high boots.

'The first offence shall be forgiven,' answered Eroshka, 'but if you oversleep another time you'll be fined a pail of *chikhir*. When it gets warmer you'll not find the deer.'

'And even if we do find him, he is wiser than we

are,' said Olenin, repeating the words spoken by the old man the evening before, ' and you can't deceive him ! '

' Yes, laugh away ! You kill one first, and then you may talk. Now then, hurry up ! Look, there 's the master himself coming to see you,' added Eroshka, looking out of the window. ' Just see how he 's got himself up. He 's put on a new coat so that you should see that he is an officer. Ah, these people, these people ! ' and, right enough, Vanyusha came in and announced that the master of the house wished to see Olenin.

' *L'arjan !*' he remarked profoundly, to forewarn his master of the meaning of this visitation. Following him, the master of the house, in a new Circassian coat with an officer's stripes on the shoulders and with polished boots (quite exceptional among Cossacks) entered the room, swaying from side to side and congratulating his lodger on its being a holiday.

The Teacher, Elias Vasilich, was an *educated* Cossack. He had been to Russia proper, was a regimental school-teacher, and above all, he was noble. He wished to appear noble, but one could not help feeling that beneath his grotesque pretence of polish, his affectation, his self-confidence, and his absurd way of speaking, he was just the same as Daddy Eroshka. This could also clearly be seen by his sunburnt face and his hands and his red nose. Olenin asked him to sit down.

' Good morning, Father Elias Vasilich,' said Eroshka, rising with (or so it seemed to Olenin) an ironically low bow.

' Good morning, Daddy. So you 're here already,' said the Teacher, with a careless nod.

The Teacher was a man of about forty, with a grey pointed beard, skinny and lean, but handsome and very fresh-looking for his age. Having come to see Olenin, he was evidently afraid of being taken for an ordinary Cossack, and wanted to let Olenin feel his importance from the first.

‘That’s our Egyptian Nimrod,’ he remarked, addressing Olenin, and pointing to the old man with a self-satisfied smile. ‘A mighty hunter before the Lord ! He’s our foremost man on every hand. You’ve already been pleased to get acquainted with him.’

Daddy Eroshka gazed at his feet, in their shoes of wet raw hide, and shook his head thoughtfully at the Teacher’s ability and learning, and muttered to himself : ‘Gyptian Nimvrod ! What things he invents !’

‘Yes, you see, we mean to go hunting,’ answered Olenin.

‘Yes, sir, exactly,’ said the Teacher, ‘but I have a small business with you.’

‘What do you want ?’

‘Seeing that you are a gentleman,’ began the Teacher, ‘and as I may understand myself to be in the rank of an officer too, and therefore we may always progressively negotiate, as gentlemen do . . .’ (He stopped and looked with a smile at Olenin and at the old man.) ‘But if you have the desire with my consent, then, as my wife is a foolish woman of our class, she could not quite comprehend your words of yesterday’s date. Therefore my quarters might be let for six rubles to the Regimental Adjutant, without the stables ; but I can always avert it from myself free of charge. But, as you desire, therefore I, being

myself of an officer's rank, can come to an agreement with you in everything, personally, as an inhabitant of this district, not according to our customs, but can maintain the conditions in every way. . . .

‘Speaks clearly !’ muttered the old man.

The Teacher continued in the same strain for a long time. At last, not without difficulty, Olenin gathered that the Teacher wished to let his rooms to him, Olenin, for six rubles a month. The latter gladly agreed to this, and offered his visitor a glass of tea. The Teacher declined it.

‘According to our silly custom we consider it a sort of sin to drink out of a “worldly” tumbler,’ he said. ‘Though, of course, with my education I may understand, but my wife from her human weakness . . .’

‘Well then, will you have some tea ?’

‘If you will permit me, I will bring my own particular glass,’ answered the Teacher, and stepped out into the porch.

‘Bring me my glass !’ he cried.

In a few minutes the door opened, and a young sunburnt arm in a print sleeve thrust itself in, holding a tumbler in the hand. The Teacher went up, took it, and whispered something to his daughter. Olenin poured tea for the Teacher into the latter's own ‘particular’ glass, and for Eroshka into a ‘worldly’ glass.

‘However, I do not desire to detain you,’ said the Teacher, scalding his lips and emptying his tumbler. ‘I too have a great liking for fishing, and I am here, so to say, only on leave of absence for recreation from my duties. I too have the desire to tempt fortune and see whether some

*Gifts of the Terek*¹ may not fall to my share. I hope you too will come and see us and have a drink of our wine, according to the custom of our village,' he added. The Teacher bowed, shook hands with Olenin, and went out. While Olenin was getting ready, he heard the Teacher giving orders to his family in an authoritative and sensible tone, and a few minutes later he saw him pass by the window in a tattered coat, with his trousers rolled up to his knees, and a fishing net over his shoulder.

‘A rascal !’ said Daddy Eroshka, emptying his ‘worldly’ tumbler. ‘And will you really pay him six rubles ? Was such a thing ever heard of ? They would let you the best hut in the village for two rubles. What a beast ! Why, I’d let you have mine for three !’

‘No, I’ll remain here,’ said Olenin.

‘Six rubles ! . . . Clearly it’s a fool’s money. Eh, eh, eh !’ answered the old man. ‘Let’s have some *chikhir*, Ivan !’

Having had a snack and a drink of vodka to prepare themselves for the road, Olenin and the old man went out together before eight o’clock. At the gate they came up against a wagon, to which a pair of oxen were harnessed. With a white kerchief tied round her head nearly to her eyes, a coat over her smock, and wearing high boots, Maryanka, with a long switch in her hand, was dragging the oxen by a cord tied to their horns.

‘Mammy,’ said the old man, pretending that he was going to seize her.

Maryanka flourished her switch at him, and glanced merrily at them both with her beautiful eyes.

¹ The name of a well-known Russian poem.

Olenin felt still more light-hearted.

‘Now then, come on, come on,’ he said, throwing his gun on his shoulder and conscious of the girl’s eyes upon him.

‘Gee, gee !’ sounded Maryanka’s voice behind them, followed by the creak of the moving wagon.

As long as their road lay through the pastures at the back of the village, Eroshka went on talking. He could not forget the Teacher, and kept on abusing him.

‘Why are you so angry with him ?’ asked Olenin.

‘He’s stingy. I don’t like it,’ answered the old man. ‘He’ll leave it all behind when he dies ! Then who’s he saving up for ? He’s built two houses, and he’s got a second garden from his brother by a law-suit. And in the matter of papers what a dog he is ! They come to him from other villages to fill up documents. As he writes it out, exactly so it happens. He gets it quite exact. But who is he saving for ? He’s only got one boy and the girl ; when she is married who’ll be left ?’

‘Well then, he’s saving up for her dowry,’ said Olenin.

‘What dowry ? The girl is sought after, she’s a fine girl. But he’s such a devil that he must yet marry her to a rich fellow. He wants to get a big price for her. There’s Luke, a Cossack, a neighbour and a nephew of mine, a fine lad. It’s he who killed the Chechen—he has been wooing her for a long time, but he hasn’t let him have her. He’s given one excuse and another, and a third. “The girl’s too young,” he says. But I know what he is thinking. He wants to keep them bowing to

him. What a lot of scandal there has been about her lately. Still they will get her for Lukashka, because he is the best Cossack in the village, a brave, who has killed an *abrek*, and will be rewarded with a cross.'

' But how about this ? When I was walking up and down the yard last night, I saw my landlord's daughter and some Cossack kissing,' said Olenin.

' You're pretending ! ' cried the old man, stopping.

' On my word,' said Olenin.

' Women are the devil,' said Eroshka, pondering.

' But what Cossack was it ? '

' I couldn't see.'

' Well, what sort of a cap had he, a white one ? '

' Yes.'

' And a red coat ? About your height ? '

' No, a bit taller.'

' It's he ! ' and Eroshka burst out laughing.

' It's himself, it's Mark. He is Luke, but I call him Mark for a joke. His very self ! I love him. I was just such a one myself. What's the good of minding them ? My sweetheart used to sleep with her mother and her sister-in-law, but I managed to get in. She used to sleep upstairs ; that witch her mother was a regular demon ; it's awful how she hated me. Well, I used to come with a chum, Girchik his name was. We'd come under her window, and I'd climb on his shoulders, push up the window and begin groping about. She used to sleep just there on a bench. Once I woke her up and she nearly called out. She had not recognized me. "Who is there ?" she said, and I could not answer. Her mother was even beginning to stir, but I took off my cap and shoved it over her

mouth ; and she at once knew it, by a seam in it, and ran out to me. I used not to want anything then. She'd bring along clotted cream and grapes and everything,' added Eroshka (who always explained things practically), ' and she was not the only one. It was a life ! '

' And what now ? '

' Now we'll follow the dog, get a pheasant to settle on a tree, and then you may fire.'

' Would you have made up to Maryanka ? '

' Attend to the dogs. I'll tell you to-night,' said the old man, pointing to his favourite dog, Lyamka.

After a pause they continued talking while they went about a hundred paces. Then the old man stopped again and pointed to a twig that lay across the path.

' What do you think of that ? ' he said. ' You think it's nothing ? It's bad that this stick is lying so.'

' Why is it bad ? '

He smiled.

' Ah, you don't know anything. Just listen to me. When a stick lies like that, don't you step across it, but go round it, or throw it off the path this way, and say "Father and Son and Holy Ghost," and then go on with God's blessing. Nothing will happen to you. That's what the old men used to teach me.'

' Come, what rubbish ! ' said Olenin. ' You'd better tell me more about Maryanka. Does she carry on with Lukashka ? '

' Hush, . . . be quiet now ! ' the old man again interrupted in a whisper : ' just listen, we'll go round by the wood.'

And the old man, stepping quietly in his soft shoes, led the way by a narrow path into the dense, wild, overgrown forest. Now and again with a frown he turned to look at Olenin, who rustled and clattered with his heavy boots and, carrying his gun carelessly, several times caught the twigs of the trees that grew across the path.

‘Don’t make a noise. Step softly, soldier !’ the old man whispered angrily.

There was a feeling in the air that the sun had risen. The mist was dissolving, but it still enveloped the tops of the trees. The forest looked terribly high. At every step the aspect changed : what had appeared like a tree proved to be a bush, and a reed looked like a tree.

CHAPTER XIX

It was calm. The sounds from the village, audible at first, now no longer reached the sportsmen. Only the brambles cracked as the dogs ran under them, and now and then birds called to one another. Olenin knew that danger lurked in the forest, that *abreks* always hid in such places. But he knew too that in the forest, for a man on foot, a gun is a great protection. Not that he was afraid, but he felt that another in his place might be ; and looking into the damp misty forest and listening to the rare and faint sounds with strained attention, he changed his hold on his gun and experienced a pleasant feeling that was new to him. Daddy Eroska went in front, stopping and carefully scanning every puddle where an animal had left a double track, and pointing it out to Olenin.

He hardly spoke at all, and only occasionally made remarks in a whisper. The track they were following had once been made by wagons, but the grass had long overgrown it. The elm and plane-tree forest, on both sides of them, was so dense and overgrown with creepers that it was impossible to see anything through it. Nearly every tree was enveloped from top to bottom with wild grape vines, and dark bramble bushes thickly covered the ground. Every little glade was overgrown with blackberry bushes and grey feathery reeds. In places large hoof-prints and small funnel-shaped pheasant trails led from the path into the thicket. The vigour of the growth of this forest untrampled by cattle, struck Olenin at every turn, for he had never seen anything like it. This forest, the danger, the old man and his mysterious whispering, Maryanka with her virile upright bearing, and the mountains—all this seemed to him like a dream.

‘A pheasant has settled,’ whispered the old man, looking round and pulling his cap over his face—‘Cover your mug! A pheasant!’ he moved his arm angrily at Olenin, and pushed forward almost on all fours. ‘He don’t like a man’s mug.’

Olenin was still behind him when the old man stopped and began examining a tree. A cock-pheasant on the tree clucked at the dog that was barking at it, and Olenin saw the pheasant; but at that moment a report, as of a cannon, came from Eroshka’s enormous gun; the bird fluttered up and, losing some feathers, fell to the ground. Coming up to the old man, Olenin disturbed another, and raising his gun he aimed and fired. The pheasant flew swiftly up, and then, catching

at the branches as he fell, dropped like a stone to the ground.

‘Good man !’ the old man (who could not hit a flying bird) shouted, laughing.

Having picked up the pheasants, they went on. Olenin, excited by the exercise and the praise, kept addressing remarks to the old man.

‘Stop ! Come this way,’ the old man interrupted.
‘I noticed the track of deer here, yesterday.’

After they had turned into the thicket and gone some three hundred paces, they scrambled through into a glade overgrown with reeds and partly under water. Olenin failed to keep up with the old huntsman, and presently Daddy Eroshka, some twenty paces in front, stooped down, nodding and beckoning with his arm. On coming up with him, Olenin saw a man’s footprint to which the old man was pointing.

‘D’you see ?’

‘Yes, well ?’ said Olenin, trying to speak as calmly as he could. ‘A man’s footprint !’

Involuntarily a thought of Cooper’s *Pathfinder* and of *abreks* flashed through Olenin’s mind, but noticing the mysterious manner with which the old man moved on, he hesitated to question him, and remained in doubt whether this mysteriousness was caused by fear of danger, or by the sport.

‘No, it’s my own footprint,’ the old man said quietly, and pointed to some grass, under which the track of an animal was just perceptible.

The old man went on, and Olenin kept up with him. Descending to lower ground some twenty paces farther on, they came upon a spreading pear-tree, under which, on the black earth, lay the fresh dung of some animal. The spot, all covered over

with wild vines, was like a cosy arbour, dark and cool.

‘ He’s been here this morning,’ said the old man with a sigh ; ‘ the lair is still damp ; quite fresh.’

Suddenly they heard a terrible crash in the forest some ten paces from where they stood. They both started and seized their guns, but they could see nothing and only heard the branches breaking. The rhythmical rapid thud of galloping was heard for a moment and then changed into a hollow rumble which resounded farther and farther off, re-echoing in wider and wider circles through the forest. Olenin felt as though something had snapped in his heart. He peered carefully, but vainly, into the green thicket, and then turned to the old man. Daddy Eroshka, with his gun pressed to his breast, stood motionless ; his cap was thrust backwards, his eyes gleamed with an unwonted glow, and his mouth open, with its worn yellow teeth, seemed to have stiffened in that position.

‘ A horned stag !’ he muttered, and throwing down his gun in despair he began pulling at his grey beard. ‘ Here it stood. We should have come round by the path. . . . Fool ! fool !’ and he gave his beard an angry tug. ‘ Fool ! Pig !’ he repeated, pulling painfully at his own beard.

Through the forest something seemed to fly away in the mist, and ever farther and farther off was heard the sound of the flight of the stag.

It was already dusk when, hungry, tired, but full of vigour, Olenin returned with the old man. Dinner was ready. He ate and drank with the old man till he felt warm and merry. Olenin then went out into the porch. Again westwards before

his eyes rose the mountains. Again the old man told his endless stories of hunting, of *abreks*, of sweethearts, and of all that free and reckless life. Again the fair Maryanka went in and out and across the yard, and her smock outlined the powerful form of the beautiful maiden.

CHAPTER XX

THE next day, Olenin went alone to the spot where he and the old man had startled the stag. Instead of passing round through the gate, he climbed over the prickly hedge, as everybody else did, and before he had had time to pull out the thorns that had caught in his coat, his dog, which had run on in front, started two pheasants. He had hardly stepped among the briars, when the pheasants began to rise at every step (the old man had not shown him that place the day before, as he meant to keep it for shooting from behind the screen). Olenin fired twelve times, and killed five pheasants, but clambering after them through the briars he got so fatigued that he was drenched with perspiration. He called off his dog, uncocked his gun, put in a bullet above the small shot, and, brushing away the mosquitoes with the wide sleeve of his Circassian coat, he went slowly to the spot where they had been the day before. It was, however, impossible to keep back the dog, who found trails on the very path, and Olenin killed two more pheasants, so that, after being detained by this, it was getting towards noon before he began to find the place he was looking for.

The day was perfectly clear, calm, and hot. The morning moisture had dried up even in the forest,

and myriads of mosquitoes literally covered his face, his back, and his arms. His dog had turned from black to grey, its back being covered with mosquitoes, and so had Olenin's coat, through which the insects thrust their stings. Olenin was ready to run away from them, and it seemed to him that it was impossible to live in this country in the summer. He was about to go home, but remembering that other people managed to endure such pain, he resolved to bear it, and gave himself up to be devoured. And, strange to say, by noontime the feeling became actually pleasant. He even felt that without this mosquito-filled atmosphere around him, and that mosquito-paste mingled with perspiration which his hand smeared over his face, and that unceasing irritation all over his body, the forest would lose for him some of its character and charm. These myriads of insects were so well suited to that monstrously lavish wild vegetation, these multitudes of birds and beasts which filled the forest, this dark foliage, this hot scented air, these runlets filled with turbid water which everywhere soaked through from the Terek and gurgled here and there under the overhanging leaves, that the very thing which had at first seemed to him dreadful and intolerable, now seemed pleasant. After going round the place where yesterday they had found the animal, and not finding anything, he felt inclined to rest. The sun stood right above the forest and poured its perpendicular rays down on his back and head whenever he came out into a glade, or on to the road. The seven heavy pheasants dragged painfully at his waist. Having found the traces of yesterday's stag, he crept under a bush into the thicket just where the stag had

lain, and lay down in its lair. He examined the dark foliage around him, the place marked by the stag's perspiration, and yesterday's dung, the imprint of the stag's knees, the bit of black earth it had kicked up, and his own footprints of the day before. He felt cool and comfortable and did not think of or wish for anything. And suddenly he was overcome by such a strange feeling of causeless joy, and of love for everything, that, from an old habit of his childhood, he began crossing himself and thanking some one. Suddenly, with extraordinary clearness, he thought : 'Here am I, Dmitry Olenin, a being quite distinct from every other being, now lying all alone, Heaven only knows where,—where a stag used to live—an old stag, a beautiful stag, who perhaps had never seen a man, and in a place where no human being has ever sat, or thought these thoughts. Here I sit, and around me stand old and young trees, one of them festooned with wild grape vines, and pheasants are fluttering, driving one another about and perhaps scenting their murdered brothers.' He felt his pheasants, examined them, and wiped the warm blood off his hand on to his coat. 'Perhaps the jackals scent them, and with dissatisfied faces go off in another direction : above me, flying in among the leaves, which to them seem enormous islands, mosquitoes hang in the air and buzz : one, two, three, four, a hundred, a thousand, a million mosquitoes, and all of them buzz something or other, and each one of them is separate from all else, and is just such a separate Dmitry Olenin as I am myself.' He imagined vividly what the mosquitoes buzzed : 'This way, this way, lads ! Here's some one we can eat !' They buzzed, and

stuck to him. And it was clear to him that he was not a Russian nobleman, a member of Moscow society, the friend and relation of so-and-so and so-and-so, but just such a mosquito, or pheasant, or deer, as those that were now living all round him. 'Just as they, just as Daddy Eroshka, I shall live awhile and die, and as he says truly : grass will grow and nothing more.'

'But what though the grass does grow ?' he continued thinking, 'Still I must live, and be happy, because happiness is all I desire. Never mind what I am—an animal like all the rest, above whom the grass will grow, and nothing more ; or a frame in which a bit of the one God has been set,—still I must live in the very best way. How then must I live to be happy, and why was I not happy before ?' And he began to recall his former life, and he felt disgusted with himself. He appeared to himself to have been terribly exacting and selfish, though he now saw that all the while he really needed nothing for himself. And he looked round at the foliage with the light shining through it, at the setting sun and the clear sky, and he felt just as happy as before.

'Why am I happy, and what used I to live for ?' thought he. 'How much I exacted for myself ; how I schemed and did not manage to gain anything but shame and sorrow ! and, there now, I require nothing to be happy ;' and suddenly a new light seemed to reveal itself to him. 'Happiness is this !' he said to himself, 'Happiness lies in living for others. That is evident. The desire for happiness is innate in every man ; therefore it is legitimate. When trying to satisfy it selfishly—that is, by seeking for oneself riches, fame, comforts, or

love—it may happen that circumstances arise which make it impossible to satisfy these desires. It follows that it is these desires that are illegitimate, but not the need for happiness. But what desires can always be satisfied, despite external circumstances ? What are they ? Love, self-sacrifice.' He was so glad and excited when he had discovered this, as it seemed to him, new truth, that he jumped up and began impatiently seeking some one to sacrifice himself for, to do good to, and to love. ' Since one wants nothing for oneself,' he kept thinking, ' why not live for others ? '

He took up his gun with the intention of returning home quickly to think this out and to find an opportunity of doing good. He made his way out of the thicket.

When he had come out into the glade he looked around him ; the sun was no longer visible above the tree-tops. It had grown cooler, and the place seemed to him quite strange, and not like the country round the village. Everything seemed changed—the weather and the character of the forest ; the sky was wrapped in clouds, the wind was rustling in the tree-tops, and all around nothing was visible but reeds and dying broken-down trees. He called to his dog, who had run away to follow some animal, and his voice came back as in a desert. And suddenly he was seized with a terrible sense of weirdness. He grew frightened. He remembered the *abreks*, and the murders he had been told about, and he expected every moment that an *abrek* would spring from behind every bush, and he would have to defend his life and die, or be a coward. He thought of God and of the future life as for long he had not

thought about them. And all around was that same gloomy stern wild nature. 'And is it worth while living for oneself,' thought he, 'when at any moment you may die, and die without having done any good; and so that no one will know of it?' He went in the direction where he fancied the village lay. Of his shooting he had no further thought; but he felt tired to death, and peered round at every bush and tree with particular attention and almost with terror, every moment expecting to be called to account for his life. After having wandered about for a considerable time, he came upon a ditch down which was flowing cold sandy water from the Terek, and, not to go astray any longer, he decided to follow it. He went on, without knowing whither the ditch would lead him. Suddenly the reeds behind him crackled. He shuddered and seized his gun. He felt ashamed of himself: the over-excited dog, panting hard, had thrown itself into the cold water of the ditch, and was lapping it!

He too had a drink, and then followed the dog in the direction it wished to go, thinking it would lead him to the village. But despite the dog's company, everything around him seemed still more dreary. The forest grew darker, and the wind grew stronger and stronger in the tops of the broken old trees. Some large birds circled, screeching, round their nests in those trees. The vegetation grew poorer, and he came oftener and oftener upon rustling reeds and bare sandy spaces, covered with animal footprints. To the howling of the wind was added another kind of cheerless monotonous roar. Altogether his spirits became gloomy. Putting his hand behind him he felt his

pheasants, and found one missing. It had broken off and was lost, and only the bleeding head and beak remained sticking in his belt. He felt more frightened than he had ever been before. He began to pray to God, and feared above all that he might die without having done anything good or kind ; and he so wanted to live, and to live so as to perform a feat of self-sacrifice.

CHAPTER XXI

SUDDENLY it was as though the sun had shone into his soul. He heard Russian being spoken, and also heard the rapid smooth flow of the Terek, and a few steps farther in front of him saw the brown moving surface of the river with the dim-coloured wet sand of its banks and shallows, the distant steppe, the cordon watch-tower outlined above the water, a saddled, hobbled horse among the brambles, and then the mountains opening out before him. The red sun appeared for an instant from under a cloud, and its last rays glittered brightly along the river over the reeds, on the watch-tower and on a group of Cossacks, among whom Lukashka's vigorous figure attracted Olenin's involuntary attention.

Olenin felt that he was again, without any apparent cause, perfectly happy. He had come upon the Nizhne-Prototsk post on the Terek, opposite a pro-Russian Tartar village on the other bank of the river. He accosted the Cossacks, but not finding as yet any excuse for doing any one a kindness he entered the hut ; nor in the hut did he find any such opportunity. The Cossacks

received him coldly. On entering the mud hut he lit a cigarette. The Cossacks paid little attention to him, first because he was smoking a cigarette, and secondly because they had something else to divert them that evening. Some hostile Chechens, relatives of the *abrek* who had been killed, had come from the hills with a scout to ransom the body ; and the Cossacks were waiting for their Commanding Officer's arrival from the village. The dead's man brother, tall and well-shaped, with a short cropped beard which was dyed red, despite his very tattered coat and cap was calm and majestic as a king. His face was very like that of the dead *abrek*. He did not deign to look at any one and never once glanced at the dead body, but, sitting on his heels in the shade, he spat as he smoked his short pipe, and occasionally uttered some few guttural sounds of command, which were respectfully listened to by his companion. He was evidently a brave who had met Russians more than once before in quite other circumstances, and nothing about them could astonish or even interest him. Olenin was about to approach the dead body and had begun to look at it, when the brother, looking up at him from under his brows with calm contempt, said something sharply and angrily. The scout hastened to cover the dead's man face with his coat. Olenin was struck by the dignified and stern expression of the brave's face. He began to speak to him, asking from what village he came, but the Chechen, scarcely giving him a glance, spat contemptuously and turned away. Olenin was so surprised at the Chechen not being interested in him, that he could only put it down to the man's stupidity or ignor-

ance of Russian ; so he turned to the scout who also acted as interpreter. The scout was as ragged as the other, but instead of being red-haired he was black-haired, fidgety, with extremely white gleaming teeth and sparkling black eyes. The scout willingly entered into conversation, and asked for a cigarette.

‘ There were five brothers,’ began the scout in his broken Russian. ‘ This is the third brother the Russians have killed, only two are left. He is a brave, a great brave ! ’ he said, pointing to the Chechen. ‘ When they killed Ahmet Khan (the dead brave) this one was sitting on the opposite bank among the reeds. He saw it all. Saw him laid in the skiff and brought to the bank. He sat there till the night and wished to kill the old man, but the others would not let him.’

Lukashka went up to the speaker, and sat down.

‘ Of what village ? ’ asked he.

‘ From there in the hills,’ replied the scout, pointing to the misty bluish gorge beyond the Terek. ‘ Do you know Suzuk-su ? It is about eight miles beyond that.’

‘ Do you know Girey Khan in Suzuk-su ? ’ asked Lukashka, evidently proud of the acquaintance. ‘ He is my *kunak*. ’

‘ He is my neighbour,’ answered the scout.

‘ He’s a trump ! ’ and Lukashka, evidently much interested, began talking in Tartar to the scout.

Presently a Cossack captain and the head of the village arrived on horseback, with a suite of two Cossacks. The captain—one of the new type of Cossack officers—wished the Cossacks ‘ Good health,’ but none shouted in reply, ‘ Hail ! Good health to your honour,’ as is customary in the

Russian Army, and only a few replied with a bow. Some, and among them Lukashka, rose and stood erect. The corporal replied that all was well at the outposts. All this seemed ridiculous: it was as if these Cossacks were playing at being soldiers. But these formalities soon gave place to ordinary ways of behaviour, and the captain, who was a smart Cossack, just like the others, began speaking fluently in Tartar to the interpreter. They filled in some document, gave it to the scout, and received from him some money. Then they approached the body.

‘ Which of you is Luke Gavrilov ? ’ asked the captain.

Lukashka took off his cap and came forward.

‘ I have reported your exploit to the Commander. I don’t know what will come of it. I have recommended you for a cross; you’re too young to be made a sergeant. Can you read ? ’

‘ I can’t.’

‘ But what a fine fellow to look at ! ’ said the captain, again playing the commander. ‘ Put on your cap. Which of the Gavrilovs does he come of ? . . . the Broad, eh ? ’

‘ His nephew,’ replied the corporal.

‘ I know, I know. Well, lend a hand, help them,’ he said, turning to the Cossacks.

Lukashka’s face shone with joy and seemed handsomer than usual. He moved away from the corporal, and having put on his cap, sat down beside Olenin.

When the body had been carried to the skiff, the brother Chechen descended to the bank. The Cossacks involuntarily stepped aside to let him pass. He jumped into the boat, and pushed off

from the bank with his powerful leg, and now, as Olenin noticed, for the first time threw a rapid glance at all the Cossacks, and then abruptly asked his companion a question. The latter answered something, and pointed to Lukashka. The Chechen looked at him and, turning slowly away, gazed at the opposite bank. That look expressed not hatred, but cold contempt. He again made some remark.

‘What is he saying?’ Olenin asked of the fidgety scout.

‘Yours kill ours, ours slay yours. It’s always the game,’ replied the scout, evidently inventing, and he smiled, showing his white teeth, as he jumped into the skiff.

The dead man’s brother sat motionless, gazing at the opposite bank. He was so full of hatred and contempt that there was nothing on this side of the river that moved his curiosity. The scout, standing up at one end of the skiff and dipping his paddle now on one and then on the other, steered skilfully, while talking incessantly. The skiff became smaller and smaller as it moved obliquely across the stream; the voices became scarcely audible, and at last, still within sight, they landed on the opposite bank, where their horses stood waiting. There they lifted out the corpse, and (though the horse shied) laid it across one of the saddles, mounted, and rode at a foot-pace along the road past a Tartar village, from which a crowd came out to look at them.

The Cossacks on the Russian side of the river were highly satisfied and jolly. Laughter and jokes were heard on all sides. The captain and the head of the village entered the mud hut to regale

themselves. Lukashka, vainly striving to impart a sedate expression to his merry face, sat down with his elbows on his knees beside Olenin, and whittled away at a stick.

‘Why do you smoke?’ he said with assumed curiosity. ‘Is it good?’

He evidently spoke because he noticed Olenin felt ill at ease and isolated among the Cossacks.

‘It’s just a habit,’ answered Olenin. ‘Why?’

‘H’m, if one of us were to smoke there would be a row! Look there now, the mountains are not far off,’ continued Lukashka, ‘yet you can’t get there! How will you get back alone? It’s getting dark. I’ll take you, if you like. You ask the corporal to give me leave.’

‘What a fine fellow!’ thought Olenin, looking at the Cossack’s bright face. He remembered Maryanka and the kiss he had heard by the gate, and he was sorry for Lukashka and his want of culture. ‘What confusion it is,’ he thought. ‘A man kills another, and is happy and satisfied with himself as if he had done something excellent. Can it be that nothing tells him that it is not a reason for any rejoicing, and that happiness lies not in killing, but in sacrificing oneself?’

‘Well, you had better not meet him again now, mate!’ said one of the Cossacks who had seen the skiff off, addressing Lukashka. ‘Did you hear him asking about you?’

Lukashka raised his head. ‘My godson?’ said Lukashka, meaning by that word the dead Chechen.

‘Your godson won’t rise, but the red one is the godson’s brother!’

‘Let him thank God that he got off whole himself,’ replied Lukashka.

‘ What are you glad about ? ’ asked Olenin. Supposing your brother had been killed, would you be glad ? ’

The Cossack looked at Olenin with laughing eyes. He seemed to have understood all that Olenin wished to say to him, but to be above such considerations.

‘ Well, that happens too ! Don’t our fellows get killed, sometimes ? ’

CHAPTER XXII

THE captain and the head of the village rode away ; and Olenin, to please Lukashka as well as to avoid going back alone through the dark forest, asked the corporal to give Lukashka leave, and the corporal did so. Olenin thought that Lukashka wanted to see Maryanka, and he was also glad of the companionship of such a pleasant-looking and sociable Cossack. Lukashka and Maryanka he involuntarily united in his mind, and he found pleasure in thinking about them. ‘ He loves Maryanka,’ thought Olenin, ‘ and I could love her,’ and a powerful novel emotion of tenderness overcame him as they walked home-wards together through the dark forest. Lukashka too felt happy ; something akin to love made itself felt between these two very different young men. Every time they glanced at one another they wanted to laugh.

‘ By which gates do you enter ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ By the middle ones. But I’ll see you as far as the marsh. After that you have nothing to fear.’

Olenin laughed.

‘Do you think I am afraid ? Go back, and thank you. I can get on alone.’

‘It’s all right ! What have I to do ? And how can you help being afraid ? Even we are afraid,’ said Lukashka to set Olenin’s self-esteem at rest, and laughed too.

‘Then come in with me. We’ll have a talk and a drink, and in the morning you can go back.’

‘Couldn’t I find a place to spend the night !’ laughed Lukashka. ‘But the corporal asked me to go back.’

‘I heard you singing last night, and also saw you.’

‘Every one . . .’ and Luke moved his head.

‘Is it true you are getting married ?’ asked Olenin.

‘Mother wants me to marry. But I have not got a house yet.’

‘Aren’t you in the regular service ?’

‘Oh dear no ! I’ve only just joined, and have not got a horse yet, and don’t know how to get one. That’s why the marriage does not come off.’

‘And what would a horse cost ?’

‘We were bargaining for one beyond the river the other day, and they would not take sixty rubles for it, though it is a Nogay horse.’

‘Will you come and be my drabant ?’ (A drabant was a kind of orderly attached to an officer when campaigning.) ‘I’ll get it arranged and will give you a horse,’ said Olenin suddenly. ‘Really now, I have two and I don’t want it.’

‘How—don’t want it ?’ Lukashka said, laughing. ‘Why should you make us a present ? We’ll get on by ourselves, by God’s help.’

‘No, really! Or don’t you want to be a *drabant*? ’ said Olenin, glad that it had entered his head to give a horse to Lukashka, though, without his knowing why, he felt uncomfortable and confused and did not know what to say when he tried to speak.

Lukashka was the first to break the silence.

‘Have you a house of your own in Russia? ’ he asked.

Olenin could not refrain from replying that he had not only one, but several houses.

‘A good house? Bigger than ours? ’ asked Lukashka, good-naturedly.

‘Much bigger; ten times as big, and three stories high,’ replied Olenin.

‘And have you steeds such as ours? ’

‘I have a hundred horses, worth three or four hundred rubles each, but they are not like yours. They are trotters, you know! But still, I like the horses here best.’

‘Well, and did you come here of your own free will, or were you sent? ’ said Lukashka, laughing at him. ‘Look! that’s where you lost your way,’ he added, ‘you should have turned to the right.’

‘I came by my own wish,’ replied Olenin. ‘I wanted to see your parts and to join some expeditions.’

‘I would go on an expedition any day,’ said Lukashka. ‘D’you hear the jackals howling? ’ he added, listening.

‘I say, don’t you feel any horror at having killed a man? ’ asked Olenin.

‘What’s there to be frightened about? But I should like to join an expedition,’ Lukashka

repeated. 'How I want to! How I want to!'

'Perhaps we may be going together. Our company is going before the holidays, and your hundred too.'

'And what did you want to come here for? You've a house, and horses, and serfs. In your place I'd do nothing but make merry! And what is your rank?'

'I am a cadet, but have been presented for a commission.'

'Well, if you're not bragging about your home, if I were you I'd never have left it! Yes, I'd never have gone away anywhere. Do you find it pleasant living among us?'

'Yes, very pleasant,' answered Olenin.

It had grown quite dark before, talking in this way, they approached the village. They were still surrounded by the deep gloom of the forest. The wind howled through the tree-tops. The jackals suddenly seemed to be crying close beside them: howling, chuckling, and sobbing, but ahead of them in the village the sounds of women's voices and the barking of dogs could already be heard; the outlines of the huts were clearly to be seen; lights gleamed, and the air was filled with the peculiar smell of *kizyak* smoke. Olenin felt keenly, that night especially, that here in this village was his home, his family, all his happiness, and that he had never and would never live so happily anywhere as he did in this Cossack village. He was so fond of everybody and especially of Lukashka that night. On reaching home, to Lukashka's great surprise, Olenin led out of the shed with his own hands a horse he

had bought in Groznoe—it was not the one he usually rode but another—not a bad horse though no longer young, and gave it to Lukashka.

‘ Why should you give me a present ? ’ said Lukashka, ‘ I have not yet done anything for you.’

‘ Really it is nothing,’ answered Olenin. ‘ Take it, and you will give me a present, and we’ll go on an expedition against the enemy together.’

Lukashka became confused.

‘ But what d’you mean by it ? As if a horse were of small value,’ he said without looking at the horse.

‘ Take it, take it ! If you don’t, you will offend me. Vanyusha ! Take the grey horse to his house.’

Lukashka took hold of the halter.

‘ Well, then, thank you ! This is something unexpected, undreamt of.’

Olenin was as happy as a boy of twelve.

‘ Tie it up here. It’s a good horse. I bought it in Groznoe ; it gallops splendidly ! Vanyusha, bring us some *chikhir*. Come into the hut.’

The wine was brought. Lukashka sat down and took the wine-bowl.

‘ God willing, I’ll find a way to repay you,’ he said, finishing his wine. ‘ How are you called ? ’

‘ Dmitry Andreich.’

‘ Well, ’Mitry Andreich, God bless you. We will be *kunaks*. Now you must come to see us. Though we are not rich people, still we can treat a *kunak*, and I will tell mother that if you need anything—clotted cream, or grapes—and if you come to the cordon I’m your servant to go hunting, or to go across the river, anywhere you like ! There now, only the other day, what a boar I

killed, and I divided it among the Cossacks ; but if I had only known, I'd have given it to you.'

' That's all right, thank you ! But don't harness the horse, it has never been in harness.'

' Why harness the horse ? And there is something else I'll tell you, if you like,' said Lukashka ; bending his head. ' I have a *kunak*, Girey Khan. He asked me to lie in ambush by the road where they come down from the mountains. Shall we go together ? I'll not betray you. I'll be your *murid*.'¹

' Yes, we'll go ; we'll go some day.'

Lukashka seemed quite to have quieted down and to have understood Olenin's attitude towards him. His calmness, and the ease of his behaviour, surprised Olenin, and he even did not quite like it. They talked long, and it was late when Lukashka, not tipsy (he never was tipsy) but having drunk a good deal, left Olenin after shaking hands. Olenin looked out of the window to see what he would do. Lukashka went out hanging his head. Then, having led the horse out of the gate, he suddenly shook his head, sprang on to its back like a cat, gathered up the reins of the halter, gave a shout and galloped down the street.

Olenin expected that Lukashka would go to share his joy with Maryanka, but, though he did not do so, Olenin still felt his soul more at ease than ever before in his life. He was as delighted as a boy, and could not refrain from telling Vanyusha, not only that he had given Lukashka

¹ In the religious and racial revival led by Shamil, a *murid* was a follower or disciple, attached to a *murshid*, or teacher.

the horse, but also why he had done it, as well as his new theory of happiness.

Vanyusha did not approve of this theory, and announced that '*l'argent il n'y a pas !*' and that therefore it was all nonsense.

Lukashka rode home, jumped off the horse, and handed it over to his mother, telling her to let it out with the communal Cossack herd. He himself had to return to the cordon that same night. His deaf sister undertook to take the horse, and explained by signs that when she saw the man who had given the horse, she would bow down at his feet. The old woman only shook her head at her son's story, and decided in her own mind that he had stolen it. She therefore told the deaf girl to take it to the herd before daybreak.

Lukashka went back alone to the cordon pondering over Olenin's action. Though he did not consider the horse a good one, yet it was worth at least forty rubles and Lukashka was very glad to have the present. But why it had been given him he could not at all understand, and therefore he did not experience the least feeling of gratitude. On the contrary, vague suspicions that the cadet had some evil intentions filled his mind. What those intentions were he could not decide, but neither could he admit the idea that a stranger would give him a horse worth forty rubles, for nothing, just out of kindness ; it seemed impossible. Had he been drunk, one might understand it ! He might have wished to show off. But the cadet had been sober, and therefore must have wished to bribe him to do something wrong. 'Eh, humbug !' thought Lukashka. 'Haven't I got the horse, and we'll

see later on. I'm not a fool myself, and we shall see who'll get the better of the other,' he thought, feeling the necessity of being on his guard and therefore arousing in himself unfriendly feelings towards Olenin. He told no one how he had got the horse. To some he said he had bought it, to others he replied evasively. However, the truth soon got about in the village, and Lukashka's mother, and Maryanka, as well as Elias Vasilich and other Cossacks, when they heard of Olenin's unnecessary gift, were perplexed, and began to be on their guard against the Cadet. But despite their fears, his action aroused in them a great respect for his simplicity and wealth.

‘Have you heard,’ said one, ‘that the cadet quartered on Elias Vasilich has thrown a forty-ruble horse at Lukashka ?’

‘He’s rich ! . . . ’

‘Yes, I heard of it,’ replied another profoundly, ‘he must have done him some great service. We shall see what will come of this cadet. Eh ! what luck that snatcher has !’

‘Those cadets are crafty, awfully crafty,’ said a third. ‘See if he don’t go setting fire to a building, or doing something !’

CHAPTER XXIII

OLEMIN’S life went on with monotonous regularity. He had little intercourse with the commanding officers or with his equals. The position of a rich cadet in the Caucasus was peculiarly advantageous in this respect. He was not sent out to work, or for training. As a reward for

going on an expedition, he was recommended for a commission, and meanwhile he was left in peace. The officers regarded him as an aristocrat, and behaved towards him with dignity. Card-playing and the officers' carousals accompanied by the soldier-singers, of which he had had experience when he was with the detachment, did not seem to him attractive, and he also avoided the society and the life of the officers in the village. The life of officers stationed in a Cossack village has long had its own definite form. Just as every cadet or officer when in a fort regularly drinks porter, plays cards and discusses the rewards given for taking part in the expeditions, so in the Cossack villages he regularly drinks *chikhir* with his hosts, treats the girls to sweetmeats and honey, dangles after the Cossack women, and falls in love, and occasionally marries there. Olenin always took his own path and had an unconscious objection to the beaten tracks. And here, too, he did not follow the ruts of a Caucasian officer's life.

It came quite naturally to him to wake up at daybreak. After drinking tea and admiring from his porch the mountains, the morning, and Mar-yanka, he would put on a tattered ox-hide coat, sandals of soaked raw hide, buckle on a dagger, take a gun, with cigarettes and some lunch in a little bag, call his dog, and soon after five o'clock he would start for the forest beyond the village. Towards seven in the evening he returned tired and hungry, with five or six pheasants hanging from his belt (sometimes with some other animal) and with his bag of food and cigarettes untouched. If the thoughts in his head had lain like the lunch and cigarettes in the bag, one might have seen

that during all those fourteen hours not a single thought had moved in it.

He returned morally fresh, strong, and perfectly happy, and he could not tell what he had been thinking about all the time. Were they ideas, memories, or dreams, that had been flitting through his mind? They were frequently all three. He would rouse himself and ask what he had been thinking about; and would see himself as a Cossack, working in a vineyard with his Cossack wife, or an *abrek* in the mountains, or a boar running away from himself. And all the time he kept peering and watching for a pheasant, a boar, or a deer.

In the evening, Daddy Eroshka would be sure to be sitting with him. Vanyusha would bring a jug of *chikhir*, and they would converse quietly, drink, and separate to go quite contentedly to bed. The next day he would again go shooting, again be healthily weary, again they would sit conversing and drink their fill, and again be happy. Sometimes, on a holiday or a day of rest, Olenin spent the whole day at home. Then his chief occupation was watching Maryanka, whose every movement, without realizing it himself, he followed greedily from his window or his porch. He regarded Maryanka and loved her (so he thought) just as he loved the beauty of the mountains and the sky, and he had no thought of entering into any relations with her. It seemed to him that between him and her such relations as there were between her and the Cossack Lukashka, could not exist, and still less, such as often existed between rich officers and other Cossack girls. It seemed to him that if he tried to do as his fellow officers did, he would exchange

his complete enjoyment of contemplation for an abyss of suffering, disillusionment and remorse. Besides, he had already achieved a triumph of self-sacrifice in connexion with her, which had given him great pleasure; but above all he was in a way afraid of Maryanka, and would not for anything have ventured to utter a word of love to her lightly.

Once during the summer when Olenin had not gone out shooting but was sitting at home, quite unexpectedly a Moscow acquaintance, a very young man whom he had met in society, came in.

‘Ah, *mon cher*, my dear fellow, how glad I was when I heard that you were here!’ he began in his Moscow French, and he went on intermingling French words in his remarks. ‘They said, “Olenin”. What Olenin? and I was so pleased. . . . Fancy fate bringing us together here! Well, and how are you? How? Why?’ and Prince Beletsky told his whole story: how he had temporarily entered the regiment, how the Commander-in-Chief had offered to take him as an aide-de-camp, and how he would take up the post after this campaign, although personally he felt quite indifferent about it.

‘Living here, in this hole, one must at least make a career—get a cross—or a rank—be transferred to the Guards. That is quite indispensable, not for myself, but for the sake of my relations and friends. The prince received me very well; he is a very decent fellow,’ said Beletsky, and went on unceasingly. ‘I have been recommended for the St. Ann’s Cross, for the expedition. Now I shall stay here a bit until we start on the campaign. It’s capital here. What women! Well, and how are you getting on? I was told by our

captain, Startsev, you know, a kind-hearted, stupid creature . . . Well, he said you were living like an awful savage, seeing no one! I quite understand you don't want to be mixed up with the set of officers we have here. I am so glad now, you and I will be able to see something of one another. I have put up at the police officer's house. There is such a girl there, Ustenka! I tell you, she is just charming.'

And more and more French and Russian words came pouring forth from that world which Olenin thought he had left for ever.

The general opinion about Beletsky was that he was a nice good-natured fellow. Perhaps he really was; but in spite of his pretty, good-natured face, Olenin thought him extremely unpleasant. He seemed just to exhale that filthiness which Olenin had forsaken. What vexed him most, was that he could not—had not the strength—abruptly to repulse this man, who came from that world: as if that old world he used to belong to had an irresistible claim on him. Olenin felt angry with Beletsky and with himself, yet, against his wish, he introduced French phrases into his own conversation, was interested in the Commander-in-Chief and in their Moscow acquaintances, and because he and Beletsky in this Cossack village both spoke French, he spoke contemptuously of their fellow officers, and of the Cossacks, and was friendly with Beletsky, promising to visit him and inviting him to drop in to see him. Olenin, however, did not himself go to see Beletsky.

Vanyusha for his part approved of Beletsky; remarking that he was a real gentleman.

Beletsky at once adopted the customary life of a rich officer in a Cossack village.

Before Olenin's eyes, in one month he came to be like an old resident of the village ; he made the old men drunk, arranged evening parties, and himself went to parties arranged by the girls,— bragged of his conquests, and even got so far that, for some unknown reason, the women and girls began calling him grandad, and the Cossacks, to whom a man who loved wine and women was clearly understandable, got used to him and even liked him better than they did Olenin, who was a puzzle to them.

CHAPTER XXIV

IT was five in the morning. Vanyusha was in the porch heating the samovar, and using the leg of a long boot instead of bellows.¹ Olenin had already ridden off to bathe in the Terek. (He had recently invented a new amusement : to swim his horse in the river.) His landlady was in her outhouse and the dense smoke of the kindling fire rose from the chimney. The girl was milking the buffalocow in the shed. 'Can't keep quiet, the damned thing !' came her impatient voice, followed by the rhythmical sound of milking.

From the street in front of the house, horses' hoofs were heard clattering briskly, and Olenin, riding bareback on a handsome dark-grey horse which was still wet and shining, rode up to the gate. Maryanka's handsome head, tied round

¹ These boots have concertina-like sides, and can be used instead of bellows to make the charcoal in the samovar burn up.

with a red kerchief, appeared from the shed, and again disappeared. Olenin was wearing a red silk shirt, a white Circassian coat girdled with a strap which carried a dagger, and a tall cap. He sat his wet, well-fed horse with a slightly conscious elegance and, holding his gun at his back, stooped to open the gate. His hair was still wet, and his face shone with youth and health. He thought himself handsome, agile, and like a brave ; but he was mistaken. To any experienced Caucasian, he was still only a soldier.

When he noticed that the girl had put out her head, he stooped with particular smartness, threw open the gate and, tightening the reins, swished his whip and entered the yard. 'Is tea ready, Vanyusha ?' he cried gaily, not looking at the door of the shed. He felt with pleasure how his fine horse, pressing down its flanks, pulling at the bridle and with every muscle quivering, and with each foot ready to leap over the fence, pranced on the hard clay of the yard. '*C'est prêt*,' answered Vanyusha. Olenin felt as if Maryanka's beautiful head was still looking out of the shed, but he did not turn to look at her. As he jumped down from his horse he made an awkward movement, and caught his gun against the porch and turned a frightened look towards the shed, where there was no one to be seen and whence the sound of milking could still be heard.

Soon after he had entered the hut he came out again and sat down with his pipe and a book on the side of the porch which was not yet exposed to the rays of the sun. He meant not to go anywhere before dinner that day, and to write some long-postponed letters ; but somehow he felt

disinclined to leave his place in the porch, and he was as reluctant to go back into the hut as if it had been a prison. The housewife had heated her oven, and the girl, having driven the cattle, had come back and was collecting *kisyak* and heaping it up along the fence. Olenin went on reading but did not understand a word of what was written in the book that lay open before him. He kept lifting his eyes from it and looking at the powerful young woman who was moving about. Whether she stepped into the moist morning shadow thrown by the house, or went out into the middle of the yard lit up by the joyous young light so that the whole of her stately figure in its bright coloured garment gleamed in the sunshine and cast a black shadow—always he feared to lose any one of her movements. It delighted him to see how freely and gracefully her figure bent : into what folds her only garment, a pink smock, draped itself on her bosom and down her shapely legs ; how she drew herself up and her tight-drawn smock showed the outline of her breathing bosom ; how the soles of her narrow feet in her worn red slippers stood on the ground without altering their shape ; how her strong arms with the sleeves rolled up, exerting the muscles, used the spade almost as if in anger, and how her deep dark eyes sometimes glanced at him. Though the delicate brows frowned, yet her eyes expressed pleasure, and a knowledge of her own beauty.

‘ I say, Olenin, have you been up long ? ’ said Beletsky, as he entered the yard, dressed in the coat of a Caucasian officer.

‘ Ah, Beletsky,’ replied Olenin, holding out his hand. ‘ How is it you are out so early ? ’

‘I had to. I was driven out; we are having a ball to-night. Maryanka,—of course you’ll come to Ustenka’s?’ he added, turning to the girl. Olenin felt surprised that Beletsky could address this woman so easily. But Maryanka, as though she had not heard him, bent her head, and throwing the spade across her shoulder went with her firm masculine tread towards the outhouse.

‘She’s shy, the wench is shy,’ Beletsky called after her. ‘Shy of you,’ he added as, smiling gaily, he ran up the steps of the porch.

‘How is it you are having a ball, and have been driven out?’

‘It is at Ustenka’s, at my landlady’s, that the ball is, and you two are invited. A ball consists of a pie and a gathering of girls.’

‘What should we do there?’

Beletsky smiled knowingly and winked, jerking his head in the direction of the outhouse into which Maryanka had disappeared.

Olenin shrugged his shoulders and blushed.

‘Well, really, you are a strange fellow!’ said he.

‘Come now, don’t pretend!’

Olenin frowned, and Beletsky noticing this, smiled insinuatingly.

‘Oh, come, what do you mean?’ he said, ‘living in the same house—and such a fine girl, a splendid girl, a perfect beauty——’

‘Wonderfully beautiful! I never saw such a woman before,’ replied Olenin.

‘Well then?’ said Beletsky, quite unable to understand the situation.

‘It may be strange,’ replied Olenin, ‘but why

should I not say what is true ? Since I have lived here, women don't seem to exist for me. And it is so good, really ! Now what can there be in common between us and women like these ? Eroshka—that's a different matter ! He and I have a passion in common—sport.'

'There now ! In common ! And what have I in common with Amalia Ivanovna ? It's the same thing ! You may say they're not very clean ; that's another matter . . . *A la guerre, comme à la guerre ! . . .*'

'But I have never known any Amalia Ivanovnas, and have never known how to behave with women of that sort,' replied Olenin. 'One cannot respect them ; but these I do respect.'

'Well, go on respecting them ! Who wants to prevent you ?'

Olenin did not reply. He evidently wanted to complete what he had begun to say. It was very near to his heart.

'I know I am an exception . . .' He was visibly confused. 'But my life has so shaped itself that I not only see no necessity to renounce my rules, but that I could not live here, let alone live as happily as I am doing, were I to live as you do. Therefore I look for something quite different from what you look for.'

Beletsky raised his eyebrows incredulously. 'Anyhow, come to me this evening ; Maryanka will be there and I will make you acquainted. Do come, please ! If you feel dull you can go away. Will you come ?'

'I would come, but to speak frankly, I am afraid of being seriously carried away.'

'Oh, oh, oh !' shouted Beletsky. 'Only come,

and I will comfort you. Will you ? On your word ?'

'I would come, but really I don't understand what we shall do ; what part we shall play !'

'Please, I beg of you. You will come ?'

'Yes, perhaps I'll come,' said Olenin.

'Really now ! Charming women such as one sees nowhere else, and to live like a monk ! What an idea ! Why spoil your life and not make use of what is at hand ? Have you heard that our company is ordered to Vozdvizhensk ?'

'Hardly. I was told the 8th Company would be sent there,' said Olenin.

'No. I have had a letter from the aide-de-camp. He writes that the Prince himself will take part in the campaign. I am very glad I shall see something of him. I'm beginning to get tired of this place.'

'I hear we shall start on a raid soon.'

'I have not heard of it ; but I have heard that Krinovitsin has received the Order of St. Ann, for a raid. He expected a lieutenancy,' said Beletsky, laughing. 'He was let in ! He has set off for head-quarters.'

It was growing dusk and Olenin began thinking about the party. The invitation he had received worried him. He felt inclined to go, but what might take place there seemed strange, absurd, and even rather alarming. He knew that neither Cossack men nor older women, nor any one besides the girls, were to be there. What was going to happen ? How was he to behave ? What would they talk about ? What connexion was there between him and those wild Cossack girls ? Beletsky had told him of such curious, cynical,

and yet rigid relations. It seemed strange to think that he would be there in the same hut with Maryana and perhaps might have to talk to her. It seemed to him impossible when he remembered her majestic bearing. But Beletsky spoke of it as if it were all perfectly simple. 'Is it possible that Beletsky will treat Maryana in the same way? That is interesting,' thought he. 'No, better not go. It's all so horrid, so vulgar, and above all—it leads to nothing!' But again he was worried by the question of what would take place; and besides, he felt as if bound by a promise. He went out without having made up his mind one way or the other; but he walked as far as Beletsky's, and went in there.

The hut in which Beletsky lived was like Olenin's. It was raised nearly five feet from the ground on wooden piles, and had two rooms. In the first (which Olenin entered by the steep flight of steps) feather-beds, rugs, blankets and cushions were tastefully and handsomely arranged, Cossack fashion, along the main wall. On the side wall hung brass basins and weapons, while on the floor, under a bench, lay water-melons and pumpkins. In the second room there was a big brick oven, a table, and sectarian icons. It was here that Beletsky was quartered, with his camp-bed and his pack and trunks. His weapons hung on the wall with a little rug behind them, and on the table were his toilet appliances and some portraits. A silk dressing-gown had been thrown on to the bench. Beletsky himself, clean and good looking, lay on the bed in his underclothing, reading *Les Trois Mousquetaires*.

He jumped up.

‘ There, you see how I have arranged things. Fine ! Well, that’s right, that you have come. They are working furiously. Do you know what the pie is made of ? Dough, with a stuffing of pork and grapes. But that’s not the point. You just look at the commotion out there ! ’

And really, on looking out of the window they saw an unusual bustle going on in the hut. Girls ran in and out, now for one thing and now for another. ‘ Will it soon be ready ? ’ cried Beletsky.

‘ Very soon ! Why ? Is Grandad hungry ? ’ and from the hut came the sounds of ringing laughter.

Ustenka, plump, small, rosy, and pretty, with her sleeves turned up, ran into Beletsky’s hut to fetch some plates.

‘ Get away, or I shall smash the plates ! ’ she squeaked, escaping from Beletsky. ‘ You’d better come and help,’ she shouted, laughing, to Olenin. ‘ And don’t forget to get some refreshments for the girls.’ (‘ Refreshments ’ meaning spice-bread and sweets.)

‘ And has Maryana come ? ’

‘ Of course ! She brought some dough.’

‘ Do you know,’ said Beletsky, ‘ if one were to dress Ustenka up and clean and polish her up a bit, she’d be better than all our beauties. Have you ever seen that Cossack woman who married a colonel ; she was charming ! Borsheva ? What dignity ! Where do they get it . . . ’

‘ I have not seen Borsheva, but I think nothing could be better than the costume they wear here.’

‘ Ah, I’m first rate at fitting into any kind of life,’ said Beletsky with a sigh of pleasure. ‘ I’ll go and see what they are up to.’ He threw his

dressing-gown over his shoulders and ran out, shouting, 'And you look after the "refreshments".'

Olenin sent Beletsky's orderly to buy spice-bread and honey ; but it suddenly seemed to him so disgusting to give money (as if he were bribing some one) that he gave no definite reply to the orderly's question : ' How much spice-bread with peppermint, and how much with honey ? '

' Just as you please.'

' Shall I spend all the money,' asked the old soldier, impressively. ' The peppermint is dearer. It 's sixteen kopeks.'

' Yes, yes, spend it all,' answered Olenin, and sat down by the window, surprised that his heart was thumping as if he were preparing himself for something serious and wicked. He heard screaming and shrieking in the girls' hut when Beletsky went there, and a few moments later saw how, accompanied by shrieks, bustle, and laughter, he jumped out and ran down the steps. ' Turned out,' he said.

A little later Ustenka entered, and solemnly invited her visitors to come in : announcing that all was ready.

When they came into the room they saw that everything was really ready. Ustenka was rearranging the cushions along the wall. On the table, which was covered by a disproportionately small cloth, was a decanter of *chikhir* and some dried fish. The room smelt of dough and grapes. Some half dozen girls in smart tunics, with their heads not covered, as usual, with kerchiefs, were huddled together in a corner behind the oven, whispering, giggling, and spluttering with laughter.

' I humbly beg you to do honour to my patron

saint,' said Ustenka, inviting her guests to the table.

Olenin noticed Maryanka among the group of girls, who without exception were all handsome, and he felt vexed and hurt that he met her in such vulgar and awkward circumstances. He felt stupid and awkward, and made up his mind to do what Beletsky did. Beletsky stepped to the table somewhat solemnly, yet with confidence and ease, drank a glass of wine to Ustenka's health, and invited the others to do the same. Ustenka announced that girls don't drink.

'We might, with a little honey,' exclaimed a voice from among the group of girls.

The orderly, who had just returned with the honey and spice-cakes, was called in. He looked askance (whether with envy or with contempt) at the gentlemen, who in his opinion were on the spree; and carefully and conscientiously handed over to them a piece of honeycomb and the cakes, wrapped up in a piece of greyish paper, and began explaining circumstantially all about the price and the change, but Beletsky sent him away. Having mixed honey with wine in the glasses, and having lavishly scattered the three pounds of spice-cakes on the table, Beletsky dragged the girls from their corners by force, made them sit down at the table, and began distributing the cakes among them. Olenin involuntarily noticed how Maryanka's sunburnt but small hand closed on two round peppermint nuts and one brown one, and that she did not know what to do with them. The conversation was halting and ungenial, in spite of Ustenka's and Beletsky's free and easy manner and their wish to enliven the

company. Olenin faltered and tried to think of something to say, feeling that he was exciting curiosity and perhaps provoking ridicule and infecting the others with his shyness. He blushed, and it seemed to him that Maryanka in particular was feeling uncomfortable. 'Most likely they are expecting us to give them some money,' thought he. 'How are we to do it? And how can we manage quickest to give it and get away?'

CHAPTER XXV

'How is it you don't know your own lodger?' said Beletsky, addressing Maryanka.

'How is one to know him if he never comes to see us?' answered Maryanka, with a look at Olenin.

Olenin felt frightened, he did not know of what. He flushed, and, hardly knowing what he was saying, remarked :

'I'm afraid of your mother. She gave me such a scolding the first time I went in.'

Maryanka burst out laughing.

'And so you were frightened?' she said; and glanced at him and turned away.

It was the first time Olenin had seen the whole of her beautiful face. Till then he had seen her with her kerchief covering her to the eyes. It was not for nothing that she was reckoned the beauty of the village.

Ustenka was a pretty girl, small, plump, rosy, with merry brown eyes and red lips which were perpetually smiling and chattering. Maryanka, on the contrary, was certainly not pretty, but

beautiful. Her features might have been considered too masculine and almost harsh, had it not been for her tall stately figure, her powerful chest and shoulders, and especially the severe yet tender expression of her long dark eyes, which were darkly shadowed beneath their black brows, and for the gentle expression of her mouth and smile. She rarely smiled, but her smile was always striking. She seemed to radiate virginal strength and health. All the girls were good-looking, but they themselves, and Beletsky, and the orderly when he brought in the spice-cakes, all involuntarily gazed at Maryanka, and any one addressing the girls was sure to address her. She seemed a proud and happy queen among them.

Beletsky, trying to keep up the spirit of the party, chattered incessantly, made the girls hand round *chikhir*, fooled about with them, and kept making improper remarks in French about Maryanka's beauty to Olenin, calling her 'yours' (*la vôtre*), and advising him to behave as he did himself. Olenin felt more and more uncomfortable. He was devising an excuse to get out and run away, when Beletsky announced that Ustenka, whose saint's day it was, must offer *chikhir* to everybody with a kiss. She consented, on condition that they should put money on her plate, as is the custom at weddings.

'What fiend brought me to this disgusting feast!' thought Olenin, rising to go away.

'Where are you off to?'

'I'll fetch some tobacco,' he said, meaning to escape; but Beletsky seized his hand, saying in French, 'I have some money, one can't go away.'

‘One has to pay here,’ thought Olenin bitterly, vexed at his own awkwardness. ‘Can’t I really behave like Beletsky? I ought not to have come, but once I am here I must not spoil their fun. I must drink like a Cossack,’ and taking the wooden bowl (holding about eight tumblers) he almost filled it with *chikhir* and drank it up. The girls looked at him, surprised and almost frightened, while he drank. It seemed to them strange and not right. Ustenka brought them another glass each, and kissed them both.

‘There girls, now we’ll have some fun,’ she said, clinking on the plate the four rubles the men had put there. Olenin no longer felt awkward, but became talkative.

‘Now, Maryanka, it’s your turn to offer us wine and a kiss,’ said Beletsky, seizing her hand.

‘Yes, I’ll give you such a kiss!’ she said, playfully, preparing to strike at him.

‘One can kiss Grandad without payment,’ said another girl.

‘There’s a wise girl,’ said Beletsky, kissing the struggling girl. ‘No, you must offer it,’ he insisted, addressing Maryanka. ‘Offer a glass to your lodger.’

And taking her by the hand he led her to the bench and sat her down beside Olenin.

‘What a beauty,’ he said, turning her head to see it in profile.

Maryanka did not resist, but, proudly smiling, turned her long eyes towards Olenin.

‘A beautiful girl,’ repeated Beletsky, and Maryanka’s look seemed to affirm, ‘Yes, see what a beauty I am.’

Without considering what he was doing, Olenin

embraced Maryanka and was going to kiss her, but she suddenly extricated herself, upsetting Beletsky and pushing the top off the table, and sprang away towards the oven. There was much shouting and laughter. Then Beletsky whispered something to the girls, and suddenly they all ran out into the passage and locked the door behind them.

‘Why did you kiss Beletsky and won’t kiss me?’ asked Olenin.

‘Oh, just so. I don’t want to; that’s all!’ she answered, pouting and frowning. ‘He’s Grandad,’ she added with a smile. She went to the door and began to bang at it. ‘Why have you locked the door, you devils?’

‘Well, let them be there, and us be here,’ said Olenin, drawing closer to her.

She frowned, and sternly pushed him away with her hand. And again she appeared so majestically handsome to Olenin, that he came to his senses and felt ashamed of what he was doing. He went to the door, and began pulling at it himself. ‘Beletsky! Open the door! What a stupid joke!’

Maryanka again gave a bright, happy laugh.

‘Ah, you’re afraid of me?’ she said.

‘Yes, you know you’re as cross as your mother.’

‘You spend more of your time with Eroshka; that will make the girls love you!’ And she smiled, looking straight and close into his eyes. He did not know what to reply.

‘And if I were to come to see you——’ he let fall.

‘That would be a different matter,’ she replied, tossing her head.

At that moment Beletsky pushed the door open, and Maryanka sprang away from Olenin, and in

doing so her thigh struck his leg. 'It's all nonsense what I have been thinking about, love and self-sacrifice and Lukashka. Happiness is the one thing. He who is happy is right,' flashed through Olenin's mind, and with a strength unexpected to himself, he seized and kissed the beautiful Maryanka on her temple and her cheek. Maryanka was not angry, but only burst into a loud laugh and ran out to the other girls.

That was the end of the party. Ustenka's mother, returned from her work, gave all the girls a scolding, and turned them all out.

CHAPTER XXVI

'YES,' thought Olenin, as he walked home. 'I need only slacken the reins a bit and I might fall desperately in love with this Cossack girl.' He went to bed with these thoughts, but expected it all to blow over, and that he would continue to live as before. But the old life did not return. His relations to Maryanka were changed. The wall that had separated them was broken down. Olenin now greeted her every time they met.

The master of the house having returned to collect the rent, on hearing of Olenin's wealth and generosity, invited him to his hut. The old woman received him kindly and, from the day of the party onwards, Olenin often went in of an evening and sat with them till late at night. He seemed to be living in the village just as he used to, but within him everything had changed. He spent his days in the forest, and towards eight o'clock, when it began to grow dusk, he would go

to see his hosts, alone or with Daddy Eroshka. They grew so used to him that they were surprised when he stayed away. He paid well for his wine, and was a quiet fellow. Vanyusha would bring him his tea, and he would sit down in a corner near the oven. The old woman did not mind him, but went on with her work, and they talked over their tea or their *chikhir* about Cossack affairs, about the neighbours, or about Russia : Olenin relating and the others inquiring. Sometimes he brought a book and read to himself. Maryanka crouched like a wild goat with her feet drawn up under her, sometimes on the top of the oven¹, sometimes in a dark corner. She did not take part in the conversations, but Olenin saw her eyes and face and heard her moving, or cracking sunflower seeds, and he felt that she listened with her whole being when he spoke, and was aware of his presence while he silently read to himself. Sometimes he thought her eyes were fixed on him and, meeting their radiance, he involuntarily became silent and gazed at her. Then she would instantly hide her face, and he would pretend to be deep in conversation with the old woman, while he listened all the time to her breathing and to her every movement, and waited for her to look at him again. In the presence of others she was generally bright and friendly with him, but when they were alone together she was shy and rough. Sometimes he came in before Maryanka had returned home. Suddenly he would hear her firm footsteps and catch a glimmer of her blue cotton smock at the

¹ The stove or oven was large, with a flat top on which any one could sit or lie.

open door. Then she would step into the middle of the hut, catch sight of him, and her eyes would give a scarcely perceptible kindly smile, and he would feel happy and frightened.

He neither sought for nor wished for anything from her, but every day her presence became more and more necessary to him.

Olenin had so fully entered into the life of the Cossack village that his past seemed quite foreign to him. As to the future, especially a future outside the world in which he was now living, it did not interest him at all. When he received letters from home, from relatives and friends, he was offended by the evident distress with which they regarded him as a lost man, while he, in his village, considered those as lost who did not live as he was living. He felt sure he would never repent of having broken away from his former surroundings and of having settled down in this village to such a solitary and original life. When out on expeditions and when quartered at one of the forts, he felt happy too ; but it was here, from under Daddy Eroshka's wing, from the forest and from his hut at the end of the village, and especially when he thought of Maryanka and Lukashka, that he seemed to see the falseness of his former life. That falseness used to rouse his indignation even before, but now it seemed inexpressibly vile and ridiculous. Here he felt freer and freer every day, and more and more of a man. The Caucasus now appeared entirely different to what his imaginations had painted it. He had found nothing at all like his dreams, nor like the descriptions of the Caucasus he had heard and read. 'There are none of all those chestnut

trees, precipices, Amalet Bek, heroes or villains,' thought he. ' The people live as nature lives : they die, are born, unite, and more are born—they fight, eat and drink, rejoice and die, without any restrictions but those that nature imposes on sun and grass, on animal and tree. They have no other laws.' Therefore, these people, compared to himself, appeared to him beautiful, strong, and free, and the sight of them made him feel ashamed and sorry for himself. Often it seriously occurred to him to throw up everything, to get registered as a Cossack, to buy a hut and cattle, and marry a Cossack woman (only not Maryanka, whom he conceded to Lukashka), and to live with Daddy Eroshka, and go shooting and fishing with him, and go with the Cossacks on their expeditions. ' Why ever don't I do it ? What am I waiting for ? ' he asked himself, and he egged himself on, and shamed himself. ' Am I afraid of doing what I hold to be reasonable and right ? Is the wish to be a simple Cossack, to live close to nature, not to injure any one, but even to do good to others, more stupid than my former dreams, such as those of becoming a minister of state, or a colonel ? ' but a voice seemed to say that he should wait and not take any decision. He was held back by a dim consciousness that he could not live altogether like Eroshka and Lukashka, because he had a different idea of happiness—he was held back by the thought that happiness lies in self-sacrifice. What he had done for Lukashka continued to give him joy. He kept looking for occasions to sacrifice himself for others, but did not meet with them. Sometimes he forgot this newly-discovered recipe for happiness, and

considered himself capable of identifying his life with Daddy Eroshka's, but he then quickly bethought himself, and promptly clutched at the idea of conscious self-sacrifice, and from that basis looked calmly and proudly at all men and at their happiness.

CHAPTER XXVII

JUST before the vintage, Lukashka came on horseback to see Olenin. He looked more dashing than ever.

'Well? Are you getting married?' asked Olenin, greeting him merrily.

Lukashka gave no direct reply. 'There, I've exchanged your horse across the river. This *is* a horse! A Kabarda horse from the Lov¹ stud. I know horses.'

They examined the new horse and made him canter about the yard. The horse really was an exceptionally fine one, a broad and long bay gelding, with glossy coat, thick silky tail and the soft fine mane and crest of a thoroughbred. He was so well fed that 'you might go to sleep on his back' as Lukashka expressed it. His hoofs, eyes, teeth, were exquisitely shaped and sharply outlined, as one only finds them in very pure-bred horses. Olenin could not help admiring the horse; he had not yet met with such a beauty in the Caucasus.

'And how it goes!' said Lukashka, patting its

¹ The Lov Stud Farm was considered one of the best in the Caucasus. See also note on p. 349.

neck. ‘ What a step ! And so clever—he simply runs after his master.’

‘ Did you have to add much to make the exchange ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ I did not count it,’ answered Lukashka with a smile. ‘ I got him from a *kunak*. ’

‘ A wonderfully beautiful horse ! What would you take for it ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ I have been offered a hundred and fifty rubles for it, but I’ll give it you for nothing,’ said Lukashka, merrily. ‘ Only say the word, and it’s yours. I’ll unsaddle it, and you may take it. Only give me some sort of a horse for my duties.’

‘ No, on no account.’

‘ Well, then, here is a dagger I’ve brought you,’ said Lukashka, unfastening his girdle and taking out one of the two daggers which hung from it. ‘ I got it from across the river.’

‘ Oh, thank you ! ’

‘ And mother has promised to bring you some grapes herself.’

‘ That’s quite unnecessary. We’ll balance up some day. You see I don’t offer you any money for the dagger ! ’

‘ How could you, we are *kunaks*. It’s just the same as when Girey Khan, across the river, took me into his home, and said, “ Choose what you like ! ” So I took this sword. It’s our custom.’

They went into the hut and had a drink.

‘ Are you staying here awhile ? ’ asked Olenin.

‘ No, I have come to say good-bye. They are sending me from the cordon to a company beyond the Terek. I am going to-night with my comrade, Nazarka.’

‘ And when is the wedding to be ? ’

‘ I shall be coming back for the betrothal, and then I shall return to the company again,’ Lukashka replied, reluctantly.

‘ What, and see nothing of your betrothed ? ’

‘ Just so—what is the good of looking at her ? When you go on campaign, ask in our company for Lukashka the Broad. But what a lot of boars there are in our parts ! I’ve killed two. I’ll take you. Well, good-bye ! Christ save you.’ Lukashka mounted his horse, and without calling on Maryanka, rode carousing down the street, where Nazarka was already awaiting him.

‘ I say, shan’t we call round ? ’ asked Nazarka, winking in the direction of Yamka’s house.

‘ That’s a good one ! ’ said Lukashka. ‘ Here, take my horse to her, and, if I don’t come soon, give him some hay. I shall reach the company by the morning, any way.’

‘ Hasn’t the cadet given you anything more ? ’

‘ I am thankful to have paid him back with a dagger—he was going to ask for the horse,’ said Lukashka, dismounting and handing over the horse to Nazarka.

He darted into the yard, past Olenin’s very window, and came up to the window of the teacher’s hut. It was already quite dark. Maryanka, wearing only her smock, was combing her hair, preparing for bed. ‘ It’s I—’ whispered the Cossack.

Maryanka’s look was severely indifferent; but her face suddenly brightened up when she heard her name. She opened the window and leant out, frightened and joyous.

‘ What—what do you want ? ’ she said.

‘ Open ! ’ uttered Lukashka. ‘ Let me in for

a minute. I am so sick of waiting ! It's awful !'

He took hold of her head through the window and kissed her.

'Really, do open !'

'Why do you talk nonsense ? I've told you I won't ? Have you come for long ?'

He did not answer, but went on kissing her, and she did not ask again.

'There, through the window, one can't even hug you properly,' said Lukashka.

'Maryanka dear !' came the voice of her mother, ' who is that with you ?'

Lukashka took off his cap, which might have been seen, and crouched down by the window.

'Go, be quick !' whispered Maryanka. 'Lukashka has called round,' she answered ; 'he is asking for Daddy.'

'Well, then send him here !'

'He's gone ; says he's in a hurry.'

In fact, Lukashka, stooping as with big strides he passed under the windows, ran out through the yard and towards Yamka's house, unseen by any one but Olenin. After drinking two bowls of *chikhir* he and Nazarka rode away to the outpost. The night was warm, dark, and calm. They rode in silence ; only the footfall of their horses was heard. Lukashka started a song about the Cossack, Mingal, but stopped before he had finished the first verse, and, after a pause, turning to Nazarka, said :

'I say, she wouldn't let me in !'

'Oh ?' rejoined Nazarka. 'I knew she wouldn't. D'you know what Yamka told me ? The cadet has begun going to their house. Daddy Eroshka

brags that he got a gun from the cadet for getting him Maryanka.'

' He lies, the old devil ! ' said Lukashka, angrily. ' She 's not such a girl. If he does not look out, I 'll whallop the devil 's sides,' and he began his favourite song :

' From the village of Izmaylov,
From the master 's favourite garden,
A bright-eyed falcon from his cage once flew there,
And soon after him a huntsman young came riding.
With his hand he beckoned to the bright-eyed falcon.
The bright-eyed falcon then made answer :
" In a golden cage you knew not how to keep me,
On your right hand you knew not how to hold me.
So now I 'll fly to the blue sea, far far away,
And there I will kill a white swan for myself,
And I will get my fill of the sweet swan-flesh. " ' ,

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE betrothal was taking place in the teacher 's hut. Lukashka had returned to the village, but had not been to see Olenin ; and Olenin had not gone to the betrothal though he had been invited. He was sad, as he had never been since he settled in this Cossack village. He had seen Lukashka earlier in the evening, and he was worried by the question why Lukashka was so cold towards him. Olenin shut himself up in his hut and began writing in his diary as follows :

' Many things have I pondered over lately, and much have I changed,' wrote he, ' and I have come back to the copybook maxim : The one way to be happy is to love, to love self-denyingly, to love everybody and everything ; to spread a web of love on all sides and to take all who

come into it. In this way I caught Vanyusha, Daddy Eroshka, Lukashka, and Maryanka.'

As Olenin was finishing this sentence, Daddy Eroshka entered the room.

Eroshka was in the happiest frame of mind. A few evenings before this, Olenin had gone to see him, and had found him with a proud and happy face deftly skinning the carcass of a boar with a small knife in the yard. The dogs (Lyamka his pet among them) were lying close by, watching what he was doing, and gently wagging their tails. The little boys were respectfully looking at him through the fence, and not even teasing him as was their wont. His women neighbours, who were as a rule not too gracious towards him, greeted him and brought him, one a jug of *chikhir*, another some clotted cream, and a third a little flour. The next day Eroshka sat in his store-room, all covered with blood, and distributed pounds of boar-flesh, taking in payment, money from some and wine from others. His face clearly expressed, 'God has sent me luck. I have killed a boar; so now I am wanted.' Consequently, he naturally began to drink, and had gone on for four days, never leaving the village. Besides which he had had something to drink at the betrothal.

He came to Olenin quite drunk: his face red, his beard tangled, but wearing a new *beshmet* trimmed with gold braid; and he brought with him a *balalayka*¹ which he had obtained beyond the river. He had long promised Olenin this

¹ A primitive three-stringed guitar, corresponding to the banjo of the American negroes.

treat, and felt in the mood for it, so that he was sorry to find Olenin writing.

‘Write on, write on, my lad,’ he whispered, as if he thought that a spirit sat between him and the paper and must not be frightened away, and he softly and silently sat down on the floor. When Daddy Eroskha was drunk, his favourite position was on the floor. Olenin looked round, ordered some wine to be brought, and continued to write. Eroskha found it dull to drink by himself, and he wished to talk.

‘I’ve been to the betrothal at the teacher’s. But there! They’re shwine!—Don’t want them!—Have come to you.’

‘And where did you get your *balalayka*? ’ asked Olenin, still writing.

‘I’ve been beyond the river and got it there, brother mine,’ he answered, also very quietly. ‘I’m a master at it. Tartar or Cossack, squire or peasant songs, any kind you please.’

Olenin looked at him again, smiled, and went on writing.

That smile emboldened the old man.

‘Come, leave off, my lad, leave off! ’ he said with sudden firmness.

‘Well, perhaps I will.’

‘Come, people have injured you, but leave them alone, spit at them! Come, what’s the use of writing and writing, what’s the good? ’

And he tried to mimic Olenin by tapping the floor with his thick fingers, and then twisted his big face to express contempt.

‘What’s the good of writing quibbles. Better have a spree and show you’re a man! ’

No other conception of writing found place in his

head, except that of legal chicanery. Olenin burst out laughing and so did Eroshka. Then, jumping up from the floor, the latter began to show off his skill on the *balalayka*, and to sing Tartar songs.

‘Why write, my good fellow ! You’d better listen to what I’ll sing to you. When you’re dead you’ll not hear any more songs. Make merry now !’

First he sang a song of his own composing, accompanied by a dance :

‘Ah, dee, dee, dee, dee, dim,
Say where did they last see him ?
In a booth, at the fair,
He was selling pins, there.’

Then he sang a song he had learnt from his former sergeant-major :

‘Deep I fell in love on Monday,
Tuesday nothing did but sigh,
Wednesday I popped the question,
Thursday waited her reply.
Friday, late, it came at last,
Then all hope for me was past !
Saturday my life to take
I determined like a man,
But for my salvation’s sake
Sunday morning changed my plan !’

Then he sang again :

‘Oh dee, dee, dee, dee, dim,
Say where did they last see him.’

And after that, winking, shrugging his shoulders and footing it to the tune he sang :

‘I will kiss you and embrace,
Ribbons red twine round you ;
And I’ll call you little Grace.
Oh ! you little Grace now do
Tell me, do you love me true ?’

And he became so excited that with a sudden

daring movement he started dancing all alone around the room.

Songs like 'Dee, dee, dee'—'gentlemen's songs'—he sang for Olenin's benefit, but after drinking three more tumblers of *chikhir* he remembered old times and began singing real Cossack and Tartar songs. In the midst of one of his favourite songs his voice suddenly trembled, and he ceased singing, and only continued strumming on the *balalayka*.

'Oh, my dear friend !' he said.

The peculiar sound of his voice made Olenin look round. The old man was weeping. Tears stood in his eyes, and one tear was running down his cheek. 'You are gone, my young days, and will never come back !' he said, blubbering and halting. 'Drink, why don't you drink !' he suddenly shouted with a deafening roar, without wiping away his tears.

There was one Tartar song that specially moved him. It had few words, but its charm lay in the sad refrain. 'Ay day, dalalay !' Eroshka translated the words of the song: 'A youth drove his sheep from the *aoul* to the mountains: the Russians came and burnt the *aoul*, they killed all the men, and took all the women into bondage. The youth returned from the mountains. Where the *aoul* had stood was an empty space; his mother not there, nor his brothers, nor his house; one tree alone was left standing. The youth sat beneath the tree and wept. "Alone like thee, alone am I left,"' and Eroshka began singing: Ay day, dalalay !' and the old man repeated several times this wailing, heart-rending refrain.

When he had finished the refrain, Eroshka suddenly seized a gun that hung on the wall, rushed hurriedly out into the yard, and fired off both barrels into the air. Then again he began, more dolefully, his 'Ay day, dalalay—ah, ah,' and ceased.

Olenin followed him into the porch and looked up into the starry sky in the direction where the shots had flashed. In the teacher's house there were lights, and the sound of voices. In the yard girls were crowding round the porch and the windows, and running backwards and forwards between the hut and the outhouse. Some Cossacks rushed out of the hut, and could not refrain from shouting, re-echoing the refrain of Daddy Eroshka's song and his shots.

'Why are you not at the betrothal?' asked Olenin.

'Never mind them! Never mind them!' muttered the old man, who had evidently been offended by something there. 'Don't like them, I don't. Oh, those people! Come back into the hut! Let them make merry by themselves and we'll make merry by ourselves.'

Olenin went in.

'And Lukashka, is he happy? Won't he come to see me?' he asked.

'What, Lukashka? They've lied to him and said I am getting his girl for you,' whispered the old man. 'But what's the girl? She will be ours if we want her. Give enough money—and she's ours. I'll fix it up for you. Really!'

'No, Daddy, money can do nothing if she does not love me. You'd better not talk like that!'

'We are not loved, you and I. We are forlorn,'

suddenly said Daddy Eroshka, and again he began to cry.

Listening to the old man's talk, Olenin had drunk more than usual. 'So now my Lukashka is happy,' thought he ; yet he felt sad. The old man had drunk so much that evening that he fell down on the floor, and Vanyusha had to call soldiers in to help, and spat as they dragged the old man out. He was so angry with the old man for his bad behaviour that he did not even say a single French word.

CHAPTER XXIX

IT was August. For days the sky had been cloudless ; the sun scorched unbearably, and from early morning the warm wind raised a whirl of hot sand from the sand-drifts and from the road, and bore it in the air through the reeds, the trees, and the village.

The grass and the leaves on the trees were covered with dust ; the roads and dried-up salt marshes were baked so hard that they rang when trodden on. The water had long since subsided in the Terek, and rapidly vanished and dried up in the ditches. The slimy banks of the pond near the village were trodden bare by the cattle, and all day long you could hear the splashing of water, and the shouting of bathing girls and boys. The sand-drifts and the reeds were already drying up in the steppes, and the cattle, lowing, ran into the fields in the day-time. The boars migrated into the distant reed-beds and to the hills beyond the Terek. Mosquitoes and gnats swarmed in

thick clouds over the low lands and villages. The snow peaks were hidden in grey mist. The air was rarefied and smoky. It was said that *abreks* had crossed the now shallow river, and were prowling on this side of it. Every night the sun set in a glowing red blaze. It was the busiest time of the year. The villagers all swarmed in the plantations and the vineyards. The vineyards thickly overgrown with twining verdure lay in cool, deep shade. Everywhere between the broad translucent leaves, ripe, heavy, black clusters peeped out. Along the dusty road from the vineyards, slowly moved the creaking carts heaped up with black grapes. Clusters of them, crushed by the wheels, lay in the dirt. Boys and girls in smocks stained with grape-juice, with grapes in their hands and mouths, ran after their mothers. On the road you continually came across tattered labourers with baskets of grapes on their powerful shoulders; Cossack maidens, wrapped in kerchiefs to their eyes, drove bullocks harnessed to carts laden high with grapes. Soldiers who happened to meet these carts, asked for grapes, and these maidens, clambering up without stopping their carts, would take an armful of grapes and drop them into the skirts of the soldiers' coats. In some homesteads they had already begun pressing the grapes; and the smell of the emptied skins filled the air. One saw the blood-red troughs in the pent-houses in the yards, and Nogay labourers with their trousers rolled up and their legs stained with the juice. Grunting pigs gorged themselves with the empty skins, and rolled about in them. The flat roofs of the outhouses were all spread over with

black clusters that were drying in the sun. Daws and magpies crowded round the roofs, picking the seeds and fluttering from one place to another.

The fruits of the year's labour were being merrily gathered in ; and this year the fruit was unusually fine and plentiful.

In the shady green vineyards, amid a sea of vines, on all sides laughter, songs, merriment, and the voices of women were to be heard and glimpses of their bright-coloured garments could be seen.

Just at noon, Maryanka was sitting in their vineyard in the shade of a peach-tree, getting out the family dinner from under an unharnessed cart. Opposite her, on a spread-out horse-cloth, sat the teacher (who had returned from the school) washing his hands by pouring water on them from a little jug. Her little brother, who had just come straight out of the pond, stood wiping his face with his wide sleeves, gazed anxiously at his sister and his mother and breathed deeply, awaiting his dinner. The old mother, with her sleeves rolled up over her strong sunburnt arms, was arranging grapes, dried fish, and clotted cream on a little low circular Tartar table. The teacher wiped his hands, took off his cap, crossed himself, and moved nearer to the table. The boy seized the jug and eagerly began to drink. The mother and daughter crossed their legs under them and sat down by the table. Even in the shade it was intolerably hot. The air above the vineyard smelt unpleasant : the strong warm wind passing amid the branches brought no coolness, but only monotonously bent the tops of the pear, peach, and mulberry trees with which

the vineyard was sprinkled. The teacher, having crossed himself once more, took a little jug of *chikhir* that stood behind him covered with a vine-leaf, and having had a drink from the mouth of the jug passed it to the old woman. He had nothing on over his shirt, which was unfastened at the neck, and showing his shaggy muscular chest. His fine-featured cunning face looked cheerful ; neither in his attitude nor in his words was his usual wiliness to be seen ; he was cheerful and natural.

‘ Shall we finish the bit beyond the shed to-night ? ’ he asked, wiping his wet beard.

‘ We’ll manage it,’ replied his wife, ‘ if only the weather does not hinder us. The Demkins have not half finished yet,’ she added. ‘ Only Ustenka is at work there, wearing herself out.’

‘ What can you expect of them ? ’ said the old man proudly.

‘ Here, have a drink, Maryanka dear ! ’ said the old woman, passing the jug to the girl. ‘ God willing, we’ll have enough to pay for the wedding feast,’ added the old woman.

‘ That’s not yet awhile,’ said the teacher with a slight frown.

The girl hung her head.

‘ Why shouldn’t we mention it ? ’ said the old woman, ‘ the affair is settled, and the time is drawing near too.’

‘ Don’t make plans beforehand,’ said the teacher. ‘ Now we have the harvest to get in.’

‘ Have you seen Lukashka’s new horse ? ’ asked the old woman. ‘ That which Dmitry Andreich Olenin gave him is gone—he’s exchanged it.’

‘ No, I have not ; but I spoke with the servant

to-day,' said the teacher, ' and he said his master has again received a thousand rubles.'

' Rolling in riches, in short,' said the old woman.

The whole family felt cheerful and contented. The work was progressing successfully. The grapes were more abundant and finer than they had expected. After dinner Maryanka threw some grass to the oxen, folded her *beshmet* for a pillow, and lay down under the wagon on the juicy down-trodden grass. She had on only a red kerchief over her head, and a faded blue print smock ; yet she felt unbearably hot. Her face was burning and she did not know where to put her feet ; her eyes were moist with sleepiness and weariness ; her lips parted involuntarily, and her chest heaved heavily and deeply.

The busy time of year had begun a fortnight ago, and the continuous heavy labour had filled the girl's life. At dawn she jumped up, washed her face with cold water, wrapped herself in a shawl, and ran out barefoot to see to the cattle. Then she hurriedly put on her shoes and her *beshmet* and, taking a small bundle of bread, she harnessed the bullocks and drove away to the vineyards for the whole day. There she cut the grapes and carried the baskets, with only one hour's interval for rest, and in the evening she returned to the village, bright and not tired, dragging the bullocks by a rope or driving them with a long stick. After attending to the cattle, she took some sunflower seeds in the wide sleeve of her smock and went to the corner of the street to crack them and have some fun with the other girls. But as soon as it was dusk, she returned home, and after having supper with her parents

and her brother in the dark outhouse, she went into the hut, healthy, and free from care, and climbed on to the oven, where, half drowsing, she listened to their lodger's conversation. As soon as he went away, she would throw herself down on her bed and sleep soundly and quietly till morning. And so it went on day after day. She had not seen Lukashka since the day of their betrothal, but calmly awaited the wedding.

She had got used to their lodger and felt his intent looks with pleasure.

CHAPTER XXX

ALTHOUGH there was no escape from the heat, and the mosquitoes swarmed in the cool shadow of the wagons, and her little brother tossing about beside her kept pushing her, Maryanka, having drawn her kerchief over her head, was just falling asleep, when suddenly their neighbour Ustenka came running towards her, and, diving under the wagon, lay down beside her.

‘Sleep, girls, sleep !’ said Ustenka, making herself comfortable under the wagon. ‘Wait a bit,’ she exclaimed, ‘that won’t do !’ She jumped up, plucked some green branches, and stuck them through the wheels on both sides of the wagon, and hung her *beshmet* over them. ‘Let me in,’ she shouted to the little boy, as she again crept under the wagon. ‘Is this the place for a Cossack ; with the girls ? Go away !’ When alone under the wagon with her friend, Ustenka suddenly put both her arms round her

and clinging close to her, began kissing her cheeks and neck.

‘Darling, brotherkin,’ she kept repeating, between bursts of shrill, clear laughter.

‘Why, you’ve learnt it from grandad,’ said Maryanka, struggling. ‘Stop it !’

And they both broke into such peals of laughter that Maryanka’s mother shouted to them to be quiet.

‘Are you envious ?’ asked Ustenka in a whisper.

‘What humbug ! Let us sleep. What have you come for ?’

But Ustenka kept on, ‘I say ! But I wanted to tell you such a thing.’

Maryanka raised herself on her elbow and arranged the kerchief which had slipped off.

‘Well, what is it ?’

‘I know something about your lodger !’

‘There’s nothing to know,’ said Maryanka.

‘Oh, you rogue of a girl !’ said Ustenka, nudging her with her elbow and laughing. ‘Won’t tell anything. Does he come to you ?’

‘He does. What of that ?’ said Maryanka, with a sudden blush.

‘Now I’m a simple lass. I tell everybody. Why should I pretend ?’ said Ustenka ; and her bright rosy face suddenly became pensive. ‘Whom do I hurt ? I love him, that’s all about it.’

‘Grandad, do you mean ?’

‘Well, yes !’

‘And the sin ?’

‘Ah, Maryanka ! When is one to have a good time if not while one’s still free ? When I marry a Cossack, I shall bear children and shall have

cares. There now, when you get married to Lukashka not even a thought of joy will enter your head : children will come, and work !'

'Well ? Some who are married live happily. It makes no difference !' Maryanka replied quietly.

'Do tell me just this once, what has passed between you and Lukashka ?'

'What has passed ? A match was proposed. Father put it off for a year ; but now it's been settled, and they'll marry us in autumn.'

'But what did he say to you ?'

Maryanka smiled.

'What should he say ? He said he loved me. He kept asking me to come to the vineyards with him.'

'Just see what pitch ! But you did not go, did you ? And what a dare-devil he has become : the first among the braves. He makes merry out there in the army too ! The other day our Kirka came home ; he says : What a horse Lukashka's got in exchange ! But all the same I expect he frets after you. And what else did he say ?'

'Must you know everything ?' said Maryanka laughing. 'One night he came to my window, tipsy, and asked me to let him in.'

'And you didn't let him ?'

'Let him, indeed ! Once I have said a thing, I keep to it, firm as a rock,' answered Maryanka seriously.

'A fine fellow ! If he wanted her, no girl would refuse him.'

'Well, let him go to the others,' proudly replied Maryanka.

'You don't pity him ?'

'I do pity him, but will have no nonsense. It is wrong.'

Ustenka suddenly dropped her head on her friend's breast, seized hold of her and shook with smothered laughter. 'You silly fool!' she exclaimed, quite out of breath. 'You don't want to be happy,' and she began tickling Maryanka.

'Ay, leave off!' said Maryanka, screaming and laughing. 'You've crushed Lazutka.'

'Hark at those young devils! Quite frisky! Not tired yet!' came the old woman's sleepy voice from the wagon.

'Don't want happiness,' repeated Ustenka in a whisper, insistently. 'But you are lucky, that you are! How they love you! You are so haughty, and yet they love you. Ah, were I in your place I'd soon turn the lodger's head! I noticed him when you were at our house. He was ready to eat you with his eyes. What things grandad has given me! And yours, they say, is the richest of the Russians. His orderly says they have serfs of their own.'

Maryanka raised herself, and after thinking a moment, smiled.

'Do you know what he once told me: the lodger, I mean?' she said, biting a bit of grass. 'He said, I'd like to be Lukashka the Cossack, or your brother Lazutka ——. What do you think he meant?'

'Oh, just chattering what came into his head,' answered Ustenka. 'What does mine not say! Just as if he was possessed!'

Maryanka dropped her head on her folded *beshmet*, threw her arm over Ustenka's shoulder, and shut her eyes. 'He wanted to come and work in the vineyard to-day: father asked him,' she said, and after a short silence she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE sun had come out from behind the pear-tree that had shaded the wagon, and, even through the branches that Ustenka had fixed up, it scorched the faces of the sleeping girls. Maryanka woke up and began arranging the kerchief on her head. Looking about her, beyond the pear-tree, she noticed their lodger, who, with his gun on his shoulder, stood talking to her father. She nudged Ustenka and smilingly pointed him out to her.

‘I went yesterday, and didn’t find a single one,’ Olenin was saying as he looked about uneasily, not seeing Maryanka through the branches.

‘Ah, you should go out there, to that direction, go right round as by compasses, there, in a disused vineyard, denominated as the Waste, hares are always to be found,’ said the teacher, having at once changed his manner of speech.

‘A fine thing to go looking for hares in these busy times ! You had better come and help us, and do some work with the girls,’ the old woman said merrily. ‘Now then, girls, up with you !’ she cried.

Maryanka and Ustenka under the cart were whispering, and could hardly restrain their laughter.

Since it had become known that Olenin had given a horse worth fifty rubles to Lukashka, his hosts had become more amiable, and the teacher in particular saw with pleasure his daughter’s growing intimacy with Olenin.

‘But I don’t know how to do the work,’ replied

Olenin, trying not to look through the green branches under the wagon, where he had now noticed Maryanka's blue smock and red kerchief.

'Come, I'll give you some peaches,' said the old woman.

'It's only according to the ancient Cossack hospitality. It's her old woman's silliness,' said the teacher, explaining, and apparently correcting, his wife's words. 'In Russia, I expect, it's not so much peaches as pine-apple jam and preserves you have been accustomed to eat at your pleasure.'

'So you say hares are to be found in the dis-used vineyard?' asked Olenin. 'I will go there,' and throwing a hasty glance through the green branches, he raised his cap and disappeared between the regular rows of green vines.

The sun had already sunk behind the fence of the vineyards, and its broken rays glittered through the translucent leaves, when Olenin returned to his host's vineyard. The wind was falling, and a cool freshness was beginning to spread around. By some instinct Olenin recognized from afar Maryanka's blue smock among the rows of vine, and, picking grapes on his way, he approached her. His highly excited dog also now and then seized a low-hanging cluster of grapes in his slobbering mouth.

Maryanka, her face flushed, her sleeves rolled up, and her kerchief down below her chin, was rapidly cutting the heavy clusters and laying them in a basket. Without letting go of the vine she had hold of, she stopped to smile pleasantly at him, and resumed her work. Olenin drew

near, and threw his gun behind his back to have his hands free. 'Where are your people? May God aid you! Are you alone?' he meant to say, but did not say, and only raised his cap in silence.

'You'll be shooting the women with your gun like that,' said Maryanka.

'No, I shan't shoot them.' They were both silent, and then, after a pause, she said: 'You should help me.' He took out his knife and began silently to cut off the clusters. He reached from under the leaves, low down, a thick bunch, weighing about three pounds, the grapes of which grew so close that they flattened each other for want of space. He showed it to Maryanka.

'Must they all be cut? Isn't this one too green?'

'Give it here.'

Their hands touched. Olenin took her hand, and she looked at him smiling.

'Are you going to be married soon?' he asked.

She did not answer, but turned away with a stern look.

'Do you love Lukashka?'

'What's that to you?'

'I envy him!'

'Very likely!'

'No, really. You are so beautiful!'

And he suddenly felt terribly ashamed of having said it, so commonplace did the words seem to him. He flushed, lost control of himself, and seized both her hands. 'Whatever I am, I'm not for you. Why do you make fun of me?' replied Maryanka, but her look showed how certainly she knew he was not making fun.

'Making fun? If you only knew how I ——'

The words sounded still more commonplace, they accorded still less with what he felt ; but yet he continued, ' I don't know what I would not do for you —— '

' Leave me alone, you pitch ! '

But her face, her shining eyes, her swelling bosom, her shapely legs, said something quite different. It seemed to him that she understood how petty were all the things he had said, but that she was superior to such considerations. It seemed to him she had long known all he wished, and was not able, to tell her, but wanted to hear how he would say it.

' And how can she help knowing,' he thought, ' since I only want to tell her all that she herself is ? But she does not wish to understand, does not wish to reply.'

' Hullo ! ' suddenly came from behind the vine at no great distance Ustenka's high voice, followed by her shrill laugh. ' Come and help me, Dmitry Andreich. I am all alone,' she cried, thrusting her round, naïve little face through the vines.

Olenin did not answer, nor move from his place.

Maryanka went on cutting and continually looked up at Olenin. He was about to say something, but stopped, shrugged his shoulders and, having jerked up his gun, with rapid strides walked out of the vineyard.

CHAPTER XXXII

HE stopped once or twice, listening to the ringing laughter of Maryanka and Ustenka who, having come together, were shouting something. Olenin spent the whole evening hunting in the forest. Without having killed anything, he returned home at dusk. When crossing the road, he noticed her open the door of the outhouse, and her blue smock showed through it. He called to Vanyusha very loud, so as to let her know that he was back, and then sat down in the porch in his usual place. His hosts now returned from the vineyard ; they came out of the outhouse and into their hut, but did not ask him in. Maryanka went twice out of the gate. Once in the twilight it seemed to him that she was looking at him. He eagerly followed her every movement, but could not make up his mind to approach her. When she disappeared into the hut he left the porch and began pacing up and down the yard ; but Maryanka did not again come out. Olenin spent the whole sleepless night out in the yard, listening to every sound in his hosts' hut. He heard them talking early in the evening, heard them having their supper, and pulling out their cushions, and going to bed ; he heard Maryanka laughing at something, and then heard everything growing gradually quiet.

The teacher and his wife talked a while in whispers, and some one was breathing. Olenin re-entered his hut. Vanyusha lay asleep in his clothes. Olenin envied him, and again went out to pace the yard, always expecting something,

but no one came, no one moved, and he only heard the regular breathing of three people. He knew Maryanka's breathing and listened to it and to the beating of his own heart. In the village everything was quiet. The waning moon rose late and the deep-breathing cattle in the yard became more visible as they lay down and slowly rose. Olenin angrily asked himself, 'What is it I want?' but could not tear himself away from the enchantment of the night. Suddenly he thought he distinctly heard the floor creak and the sound of footsteps in his hosts' hut. He rushed to the door, but all was silent again, except for the sound of regular breathing, and in the yard the buffalo-cow, after a deep sigh, again moved, rose on her front knees and then on her feet, swished her tail, and something splashed steadily on the dry clay ground, and then she lay down again in the dim moonlight. He asked himself: 'What am I to do?' and definitely decided to go to bed, but again he heard a sound, and in his imagination there rose the image of Maryanka coming out into this moonlit misty night, and again he rushed to her window, and again heard the sound of footsteps. Not till just before dawn did he go up to her window and push at the shutter and then run to the door, and this time he really heard Maryanka's deep breathing and her footsteps. He took hold of the latch and knocked. The floor hardly creaked under the bare cautious footsteps which approached the door. The latch clicked, the door creaked, and he noticed a faint smell of marjoram and pumpkin, and Maryanka's whole figure appeared in the doorway. He saw her only for an instant in the

moonlight. She slammed the door and, muttering something, ran lightly back again. Olenin began rapping softly, but nothing responded. He ran to the window and listened. Suddenly he was startled by a shrill squeaky man's voice.

'Fine !' exclaimed a rather small young Cossack, in a white cap, coming across the yard close to Olenin. 'I saw . . . fine !'

Olenin recognized Nazarka, and was silent, not knowing what to do or say.

'Fine ! I'll go and tell them at the office, and I'll tell her father ! That's a fine teacher's daughter ! One's not enough for her.'

'What do you want of me, what are you after ?' uttered Olenin.

'Nothing ; only I'll tell them at the office.'

Nazarka spoke very loud, and evidently did so intentionally, adding : 'Just see what a clever cadet !'

Olenin trembled and grew pale. 'Come here, here !'

He seized the Cossack firmly by the arm, and drew him towards his hut : 'Nothing happened, she did not let me in and I, too, mean no harm. She is an honest girl ——'

'Eh, discuss ——'

'Yes ; but all the same I'll give you something now. Wait a bit !'

Nazarka said nothing. Olenin ran into his hut and brought out ten rubles, which he gave to the Cossack.

'Nothing happened, but still I was to blame, so I give this !—— Only for God's sake don't let any one know, for nothing happened——'

'I wish you joy,' said Nazarka, laughing, and went away.

Nazarka had come to the village that night, at Lukashka's bidding, to find a place to hide a stolen horse, and now, passing by on his way home, had heard the sound of footsteps. When he returned next morning to his company, he bragged to his chum, and told him how cleverly he had got ten rubles.

Next morning Olenin met his hosts, and they knew nothing about the events of the night. He did not speak to Maryanka, and she only laughed a little when she looked at him. Next night he also passed without sleep, vainly wandering about the yard. The day after, he purposely spent shooting, and in the evening he went to see Beletsky, to escape from his own thoughts. He was afraid of himself, and promised himself not to go to his hosts' hut any more.

That night he was roused by the sergeant-major. His company was ordered to start at once on a raid.

Olenin was glad this had happened, and thought he would not again return to the village.

The raid lasted four days. The commander, who was a relative of Olenin's, wished to see him, and offered to let him remain with the staff, but this Olenin declined. He found that he could not live away from the village, and asked to be allowed to return to it. For having taken part in the raid, he received a soldier's cross, which he had formerly so much desired. Now he was quite indifferent about it, and even more indifferent about his promotion, the order for which had still not arrived.

Accompanied by Vanyusha, he rode back to the cordon without any accident, several hours in advance of the rest of the company. He spent the whole evening in his porch, watching Maryanka, and he again walked about the yard, without aim or thought, all night.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IT was late when he awoke the next day. His hosts were no longer in. He did not go shooting, but now took up a book, and now went out into the porch, and now again re-entered the hut and lay down on the bed. Vanusha thought he was ill.

Towards evening Olenin got up, resolutely began writing, and wrote on till late at night. He wrote a letter, but did not post it, because he felt that no one would have understood what he wanted to say ; and, besides, it was not necessary that any one but himself should understand it.

This is what he wrote :

‘ I receive letters of condolence from Russia. They are afraid that I shall perish, buried in these wilds. They say about me : “ He will become coarse ; he will be behind the times in every thing ; he will take to drink, and who knows but that he may marry a Cossack girl.” It was not for nothing, they say, that Ermolov¹ declared : “ Any one serving in the Caucasus for ten years, either becomes a confirmed drunkard, or marries a loose woman.” How terrible ! Indeed, it won’t do for me to ruin myself when I might have the great happiness of even becoming

¹ See note on p. 317.

the Countess B——'s husband or a Court chamberlain, or a *Maréchal de noblesse* of my district. Oh, how repulsive and pitiable you all seem to me ! You do not know what happiness is, and what life is ! One must once taste life in all its natural beauty ! Must see and understand what I see every day before me ; those eternally unapproachable snowy peaks, and a majestic woman in that primitive beauty in which the first woman must have come from her Creator's hands—and then it becomes clear who is ruining himself, and who is living truly or falsely : you or I. If you only knew how despicable and pitiable you, in your delusions, seem to me ! When I picture to myself, in place of my hut, my forests, and my love, those drawing-rooms, those women with their pomatum-greased hair eked out with false curls, these unnaturally grimacing lips, these hidden, feeble, distorted limbs, and that chatter of obligatory drawing-room conversation, which has no right to the name—I feel unendurably revolted. I then see before me those obtuse faces, those rich eligible girls, whose looks seem to say : “ It's all right, you may come near, though I am rich and eligible,”—and that arranging and rearranging of seats, that shameless match-making, and that eternal tittle-tattle and pretence ; those rules—with whom to shake hands, to whom only to nod, with whom to converse (and all this done deliberately with a conviction of its inevitability), that continual ennui in the blood passing on from generation to generation. Try to understand or believe just this one thing : you need only see and comprehend what truth and beauty are, and all that you now say and

think, and all your wishes for me and for yourselves will fly to atoms !

‘Happiness is being with nature, seeing her, and conversing with her. “He may even (God forbid) marry a common Cossack girl, and be quite lost socially,” I can imagine them saying of me with sincere pity ! Yet the one thing I desire is to be quite “lost”, in your sense of the word. I wish to marry a common Cossack girl, and dare not, because it would be a height of happiness of which I am unworthy.

‘Three months have passed since I first saw the Cossack girl, Maryanka. The views and prejudices of the world I had left were still fresh in me. I did not then believe that I could love that woman. I delighted in her beauty just as I delighted in the beauty of the mountains and the sky, nor could I help delighting in her, for she is as beautiful as they. I found that the sight of her beauty had become a necessity of my life, and I began asking myself whether I did not love her. But I could find nothing within myself at all like love, as I had imagined it to be. Mine was not the restlessness of loneliness and desire for marriage, nor was it platonic, still less a carnal love, such as I have experienced. I needed only to see her, to hear her, to know that she was near ; and if I was not happy, I was at peace.

‘After an evening gathering at which I met her and touched her, I felt that between that woman and myself there existed an indissoluble though unacknowledged bond against which I could not struggle, yet I did struggle. I asked myself : “Is it possible to love a woman who will never understand the profoundest interests of

my life ? Is it possible to love a woman simply for her beauty, to love the statue of a woman ? ” But I was already in love with her ; though I did not yet trust to my feelings.

‘ After that evening, when I first spoke to her, our relations changed. Before that, she had been to me an extraneous but majestic object of external nature : but since that, she has become a human being. I began to meet her, to talk to her, and sometimes to go to work for her father and to spend whole evenings with them, and in this intimate intercourse she remained still in my eyes just as pure, inaccessible, and majestic. She always responded with equal calm, pride, and cheerful equanimity. Sometimes she was friendly, but generally her every look, every word, and her every movement expressed equanimity—not contemptuous, but crushing and bewitching. Every day, with a feigned smile on my lips, I tried to play a part, and with torments of passion and desire in my heart I spoke banteringly to her. She saw that I was dissembling, but looked straight at me, cheerfully and simply. This position became unbearable. I wished not to deceive her, but to tell her all I felt and thought. I was extremely agitated. We were in the vineyard when I began to tell her of my love, in words I am now ashamed to remember. I am ashamed because I ought not to have dared to speak so to her, because she stood far above such words, and above the feeling they were meant to express. I said no more, but from that day my position has been intolerable. I did not wish to demean myself by continuing our former flippant relations, and at the same time I felt that I had not yet

reached the level of straight and simple relations with her. I asked myself despairingly, "What am I to do?" In foolish dreams I imagined her, now as my mistress and now as my wife, but rejected both ideas with disgust. To make her a wanton woman would be dreadful. It would be murder. To turn her into a fine lady, the wife of Dmitry Andreich Olenin, like a Cossack woman here who is married to one of our officers, would be still worse. Now could I turn Cossack, like Lukashka, and steal horses, get drunk on *chikhir*, sing rollicking songs, kill people, and when drunk climb up at her window for the night without a thought of who and what I am, it would be different: then we might understand one another, and I might be happy.

'I tried to throw myself into that kind of life, but was still more conscious of my own weakness and artificiality. I cannot forget myself and my complex, distorted past; and my future appears to me still more hopeless. Every day I have before me the distant snowy mountains, and this majestic, happy woman. But not for me is the only happiness possible in the world; I cannot have this woman! What is most terrible and yet sweetest in my condition is that I feel that I understand her, but that she will never understand me; not because she is inferior: on the contrary she ought not to understand me. She is happy, she is like nature: consistent, calm, and self-contained; and I, a weak distorted being, want her to understand my deformity and my torments! I have not slept at night, but have aimlessly passed under her windows, not rendering account to myself of what was happening to me.

‘On the 18th our company started on a raid, and I spent three days away from the village. I was sad and apathetic, the usual songs, cards, drinking-bouts, and talk of rewards in the regiment, were more repulsive than usual to me. Yesterday I returned home, and saw her, my hut, Daddy Eroshka, and the snowy mountains from my porch, and was seized by such a strong, new feeling of joy that I understood it all. I love this woman ; I feel real love for the first and only time in my life. I know what has befallen me. I do not fear to be degraded by this feeling ; I am not ashamed of my love, I am proud of it. It is not my fault that I love. It has come about against my will. I tried to escape from my love by self-renunciation, and tried to devise a joy in the Cossack Lukashka’s and Maryanka’s love, but thereby only stirred up my own love and jealousy.

‘This is not the ideal, the so-called exalted love, which I have known before ; not that sort of attachment in which you admire your own love, and feel that the source of your emotion is within yourself, and do everything yourself. I have felt that too. It is still less a desire for enjoyment : it is something different. Perhaps in her I love nature : the personification of all that is beautiful in nature ; but yet I am not acting by my own will, but some elemental force loves through me ; the whole of God’s world, all nature, presses this love into my soul, and says, “Love her.” I love her not with my mind, or my imagination, but with my whole being. Loving her, I feel myself to be an integral part of all God’s joyous world.

‘ I wrote before about the new convictions to which my solitary life had brought me ; but no one knows with what labour they shaped themselves within me, and with what joy I realized them, and saw a new way of life opening out before me ; nothing was dearer to me than those convictions. . . . Well ! . . . love has come, and neither they, nor any regrets for them, remain !

‘ It is even difficult for me to believe that I could prize such a one-sided, cold, and abstract state of mind. Beauty came and scattered to the winds all that laborious inward toil ; and no regret remains for what has vanished ! Self-renunciation is all nonsense and absurdity ! That is pride, a refuge from well-merited unhappiness, and salvation from the envy of other’s happiness : “ Live for others, and do good ! ”— Why ? when in my soul there is only love for myself, and the desire to love her, and to live her life with her. Not for others, not for Lukashka, I now desire happiness. I do not now love those others. Formerly I should have told myself that this is wrong. I should have tormented myself with the questions : What will become of her, of me, and of Lukashka ? Now I don’t care. I do not live my own life, there is something stronger than me which directs me. I suffer ; but formerly I was dead, and only now do I live. To-day I will go to their house, and will tell her everything.’

CHAPTER•XXXIV

LATE that evening, after writing this letter, Olenin went to his hosts' hut. The old woman was sitting on a bench behind the oven, unwinding cocoons. Maryana, with her head uncovered, sat sewing by the light of a candle. On seeing Olenin she jumped up, took her kerchief and stepped to the oven.

‘Maryana, dear,’ said her mother, ‘won’t you sit here with me a bit?’

‘No, I’m bareheaded,’ she replied, and sprang up on the oven.

Olenin could only see a knee and one of her shapely legs hanging down from the oven. He treated the old woman to tea. She treated her guest to clotted cream, which she sent Maryana to fetch. But, having put a plateful on the table, Maryana again sprang on the oven, from whence Olenin felt her eyes upon him. They talked about household matters. Granny Ulita became animated, and went into raptures of hospitality. She brought Olenin preserved grapes and a grape tart, and some of her best wine, and pressed him to eat and drink with the rough yet proud hospitality of country folk, only found among those who produce their bread by the labour of their own hands.

The old woman, who had at first struck Olenin so much by her rudeness, now often touched him by her simple tenderness towards her daughter.

‘Yes, we need not offend the Lord by grumbling! We have enough of everything, thank God. We have pressed sufficient *chikhir*, and have

preserved, and shall sell, three or four barrels of grapes, and have enough left to drink. Don't be in a hurry to leave us. We will make merry together at the wedding.'

'And when is the wedding to be?' asked Olenin, feeling his blood suddenly rush to his face, while his heart beat irregularly and painfully. He heard a movement on the oven, and the sound of seeds being cracked.

'Well, you know, it ought to be next week. We are quite ready,' replied the old woman, as simply and quietly as though Olenin did not exist. 'I have prepared, and have procured everything for Maryana. We will give her away properly. Only there's one thing not quite right. Our Lukashka has been running rather wild. He has been too much on the spree! He's up to tricks! The other day a Cossack came here from his company and said he had been to Nogay.'

'He must mind he does not get caught,' said Olenin.

'Yes, that's what I tell him. "Mind Lukashka, don't you get into mischief. Well, of course a young fellow naturally wants to cut a dash. But there's a time for everything. Well, you've captured or stolen something, and killed an *abrek*! Well, you're a fine fellow! But now you should live quietly for a bit, or else there'll be trouble."

'Yes, I saw him a time or two in the division; he was always merry-making. He has sold another horse,' said Olenin, and glanced towards the oven.

A pair of large, dark, and hostile eyes glittered as they gazed severely at him.

He became ashamed of what he had said. 'What of it? He does no one any harm,' sud-

denly remarked Maryana. ‘He makes merry with his own money,’ and lowering her legs she jumped down from the oven and went out, banging the door. Olenin followed her with his eyes as long as she was in the hut; and then looked at the door and waited, understanding nothing of what Granny Ulika was telling him.

A few minutes later some visitors arrived: an old man, Granny Ulika’s brother, with Daddy Eroska, and following them came Maryana and Ustenka.

‘Good evening,’ squeaked Ustenka. ‘Still on holiday?’ she added, turning to Olenin. ‘Yes, still on holiday,’ he replied, and felt, he did not know why, ashamed and ill at ease.

He wished to go away, but could not. It also seemed to him impossible to keep silent. The old man helped him by asking for a drink, and they had a drink. Olenin drank with Eroska, with the other Cossack, and again with Eroska, and the more he drank the heavier was his heart. But the two old men grew merry. The girls climbed to the oven, where they sat whispering and looking at the men, who drank till it was late. Olenin did not talk, but drank more than the others. The Cossacks were shouting. The old woman would not let them have any more *chikhir*, and at last turned them out. The girls laughed at Daddy Eroska, and it was past ten when they all went out into the porch. The old men invited themselves to finish their merry-making at Olenin’s. Ustenka ran off home, and Eroska led the old Cossack to Vanyusha. The old woman went out to tidy up the shed. Maryana remained alone in the hut. Olenin felt fresh

and joyous, as if he had only just woke up. He noticed everything, and having let the old men pass ahead, he turned back to the hut where Maryana was preparing for bed. He went up to her and wished to say something, but his voice broke. She moved away from him, sat down cross-legged on her bed in the corner, and silently looked at him with wild and frightened eyes. She was evidently afraid of him. Olenin felt this. He felt sorry and ashamed of himself, and at the same time felt proud and pleased that he aroused even that feeling in her.

‘Maryana !’ he said, ‘Will you never take pity on me ? I can’t tell you how I love you.’

She moved still farther away and said : ‘Just hear how the wine is speaking ! . . . You’ll get nothing from me !’

‘No, it is not the wine. Do not marry Lukashka. I will marry you. What am I saying,’ he thought as he uttered these words. ‘Shall I be able to say the same to-morrow ?’ ‘Yes, I shall, I am sure I shall, and I will repeat them now,’ replied an inner voice.

‘Will you marry me ?’

She looked at him seriously, and her fear seemed to have passed.

‘Maryanka, I shall go out of my mind ! I am not myself. I will do whatever you command,’ and madly tender words came from his lips of their own accord.

‘Now then, what are you drivelling about ?’ she interrupted, suddenly seizing the arm he was stretching towards her. She did not push his arm away, but pressed it firmly with her strong hard fingers.

‘ Do gentlemen marry Cossack girls ? Go away ! ’

‘ But will you ? Everything . . . ’

‘ And what shall we do with Lukashka ? ’ said she, laughing.

He snatched away the arm she was holding, and firmly embraced her young body, but she sprang away like a fawn and ran barefooted into the porch : Olenin came to his senses and was terrified at himself. He again felt himself inexpressibly vile compared to her, yet not repenting for an instant of what he had said, he went home and, without even glancing at the old men who were drinking in his room, he lay down and fell asleep more soundly than he had done for a long time.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE next day was a holiday. In the evening all the villagers, their holiday clothes shining in the sunset, were out in the street. That season more wine than usual had been produced, and the people were now free from their labours. In a month the Cossacks were to start on a campaign, and in many families preparations were being made for weddings.

Most of the people were standing in the square, in front of the Cossack Government Office and near the two shops, in one of which cakes and pumpkin seeds were sold, in the other kerchiefs and cotton prints. On the earth-embankment of the office-building sat or stood the old men in sober grey or black coats, without gold trimmings or any kind of ornament. They conversed among

themselves quietly, in measured tones, about the harvest, about the young folk, about village affairs, and about old times, looking with dignified equanimity at the younger generation. Passing by them, the women and girls stopped and bent their heads. The young Cossacks respectfully slackened their pace and raised their caps, holding them for a while over their heads. The old men then stopped speaking. Some of them watched the passers-by severely, others kindly, and in their turn slowly took off their caps and put them on again.

The Cossack girls had not yet started dancing their *horovods*,¹ but having gathered in groups, they in their bright coloured *beshmets*, with white kerchiefs on their heads pulled down to their eyes, sat, either on the ground or on the earth-banks about the huts, sheltered from the oblique rays of the sun, and laughed and chattered in their ringing voices. Little boys and girls, playing in the square, sent their balls high up into the clear sky, and ran about squealing and shouting. The rather older girls had started dancing their *horovods*; and were timidly singing in their thin shrill voices. Clerks, lads not in the service, or home for the holiday, bright-faced, and wearing smart white or new red Circassian gold-trimmed coats, went about arm in arm, in twos or threes, from one group of women or girls to another, and stopped, joking and chatting with the Cossack girls. The Armenian shop-keeper, in a gold-trimmed coat of fine blue cloth, stood at the open door, through which piles of folded bright-coloured

¹ The *horovod* is a ring formed by the girls, who move round in a circle singing.

kerchiefs were visible, and conscious of his own importance and with the pride of an oriental tradesman, waited for customers. Two red-bearded, bare-footed Chechens, who had come from beyond the Terek to see the *fête*, sat on their heels outside the house of a friend, negligently smoking their little pipes and occasionally spitting, watching the villagers and exchanging remarks with one another in their rapid guttural speech. Occasionally a workaday-looking soldier in an old overcoat passed among the bright-clad girls. Here and there the songs of tipsy Cossacks who were merry-making, could already be heard. All the huts were locked up ; the porches had been scrubbed clean the day before. Even the old women were out in the street, which was everywhere sprinkled with pumpkin and melon seed-shells. The air was warm and still, the sky deep and clear. Beyond the roofs the dead-white mountain range, which seemed very near, was turning rosy in the glow of the evening sun. Now and then, from the other side of the river, came the distant roar of a cannon, but above the village, mingling with one another, floated all sorts of merry holiday sounds.

Olenin had been pacing the yard all that morning, hoping to see Maryana. But she went to Mass at the chapel, and afterwards sat with the other girls on an earth-embankment, cracking seeds ; sometimes, again, together with her companions, she ran home, and each time gave the lodger a bright and kindly look. Olenin felt afraid to address her playfully, or in the presence of others. He wished to finish telling her what he had begun to say the night before, and to get

her to give him a definite answer. He waited for another moment like that of yesterday evening ; but the moment did not come, and he felt that he could not remain any longer in this uncertainty. She went out into the street again, and after waiting a while he too went out, and without knowing where he was going he followed her. He passed by the corner where she was sitting in her shining blue satin *beshmet*, and with an aching heart he heard behind him the girls laughing.

Beletsky's hut looked out on to the square. As Olenin was passing it he heard Beletsky's voice calling to him, 'Come in,' and in he went.

After a short talk they both sat down by the window, and were soon joined by Eroshka, who entered, dressed in a new *beshmet*, and sat down on the floor beside them.

'There, that's the aristocratic party,' said Beletsky, pointing with his cigarette to a brightly-coloured group at the corner. 'Mine is there too. Do you see her ? in red. That's a new *beshmet*.' 'Why don't you start the *horovod* ?' he shouted, leaning out of the window. 'Wait a bit, and then, when it grows dark, let us go too. Then we will invite them to Ustenka's. We must arrange a ball for them !'

'And I will come to Ustenka's,' said Olenin in a decided tone. 'Will Maryana be there ?'

'Yes, she'll be there. Do come !' said Beletsky, without the least surprise. 'But isn't it a pretty picture ?' he added, pointing to the motley crowds.

'Yes, very !' Olenin assented, trying to appear indifferent. 'Holidays of this kind,' he added,

‘ always make me wonder why all these people should suddenly be contented and jolly. To-day, for instance, just because it happens to be the fifteenth of the month, everything is festive. Eyes and faces, and voices and movements and garments, and the air and the sun, are all in a holiday mood. And we have no longer any holidays ! ’

‘ Yes,’ said Beletsky, who did not like such reflections. ‘ And why are you not drinking, old fellow ? ’ he said, turning to Eroshka.

Eroshka winked at Olenin, pointing to Beletsky. ‘ Eh, he’s a proud one, that *kunak* of yours,’ he said.

Beletsky raised his glass.

‘ *Allah birdy !* ’ he said, emptying his glass. (*Allah birdy*, ‘ God gave’, is the usual greeting of Caucasians, when drinking together.)

‘ *Sau bul* ’ (‘ Your health ’), answered Eroshka smiling, and emptied his glass.

‘ Talking about holidays ! ’ he said, turning to Olenin as he rose and looked out of the window. ‘ What sort of holiday is that ? You should have seen them make merry in the old days ! The women used to come out in their gold-trimmed *sarafans*.¹ Two rows of gold coins hanging round their necks, and gold-cloth diadems on their heads, and when they passed they made a noise, “ flu, flu,” with their dresses.

‘ Every woman looked like a princess. Sometimes they’d come out, a whole herd of them, and begin singing songs so that the air seemed to rumble, and they went on making merry all night. And

¹ A kind of gored dress worn over a blouse of different material.

the Cossacks would roll out a barrel into the yards, and sit down and drink till break of day, or they would go hand-in-hand sweeping the village. Whoever they met they seized and took along with them, and went from house to house. Sometimes they used to make merry for three days on end. Father used to come home—I still remember it—quite red and swollen, without a cap, having lost everything: he'd come and lie down. Mother knew what to do: she would bring him some fresh caviar, and a little *chikhir* to sober him up, and would herself run about in the village looking for his cap. Then he'd sleep for two days! That's the fellows they were then! But now what are they?

‘Well, and the girls in the *sarafans*, did they make merry all by themselves?’ asked Beletsky.

‘Yes, they did! Sometimes Cossacks would come on foot or on horse, and say, “Let’s break up the *horovods*,” and they’d go, but the girls would take up cudgels. Carnival week, some young fellow would come galloping up, and they’d cudgel his horse and cudgel him too. But he’d break through, seize the one he loved, and carry her off. “Mammy, darling! . . .” Oh! how he would love her! Yes, the girls in those days, they were regular queens! ’

CHAPTER XXXVI

JUST then two men rode out of the side street into the square. One of them was Nazarka. The other, Lukashka, sat slightly sideways on his well-fed bay Kabarda horse, which stepped lightly over the hard road, jerking its beautiful head with the fine glossy crest. The well-adjusted gun in its cover, the pistol at his back, and the cloak rolled up behind the saddle, showed that Lukashka had not come from a peaceful place, or from one near by. The smart way in which he sat a little sideways on his horse, the careless motion with which he touched the horse under its belly with his whip, and especially his half-closed black eyes, glistening as he looked proudly around him, all expressed the conscious strength and self-confidence of youth. 'Ever seen as fine a lad?' his eyes, looking from side to side, seemed to say. The elegant horse with its silver ornaments and trappings, the weapons, and the handsome Cossack himself, attracted the attention of every one in the square. Nazarka, lean and short, was much less well dressed. As he rode past the old men, Lukashka paused and raised his curly, white, sheepskin cap above his closely cropped black head.

'Well, have you carried off many Nogay horses?' asked a lean old man, with a frowning, lowering look.

'Have you counted them, Grandad, that you ask?' replied Lukashka, turning away.

'That's all very well, but you need not take

my lad along with you,' the old man muttered, with a still darker frown.

'Just see the old devil, he knows everything,' muttered Lukashka to himself, and a worried expression came over his face; but then, noticing a corner where a number of Cossack girls were standing, he turned his horse towards them.

'Good evening, girls!' he shouted in his powerful, resonant voice, suddenly checking his horse. 'You've grown old, without me, you witches!' and he laughed.

'Good evening, Lukashka! Good evening, laddie!' the merry voices answered.

'Have you brought much money? Buy some sweets for the girls!... Have you come for long? True enough, it's long since we saw you....'

'Nazarka and I have just flown across to make a night of it,' replied Lukashka, raising his whip and riding straight at the girls.

'Why, Maryanka has quite forgotten you,' said Ustenka, nudging Maryanka with her elbow and breaking into a shrill laugh.

Maryana moved away from the horse and, throwing back her head, calmly looked at the Cossack with her large sparkling eyes.

'True enough, you have not been for a long time! Why are you trampling us under your horse?' she remarked dryly, and turned away.

Lukashka had appeared particularly merry. His face shone with audacity and joy. Obviously staggered by Maryana's cold reply, he suddenly knitted his brow.

'Step up on my stirrup and I'll carry you away to the mountains, Mammy!' he suddenly

exclaimed, and, as if to disperse his dark thoughts, he caracoled among the girls. Stooping down towards Maryana, he said, 'I'll kiss, oh, how I'll kiss you! . . .'

Maryana's eyes met his, and she suddenly blushed and stepped back.

'Oh, bother you! you'll crush my feet,' she said, and bending her head looked at her well-shaped feet in their tightly-fitting light blue stockings with clocks, and her new red slippers trimmed with narrow silver braid.

Lukashka turned towards Ustenka, and Maryana sat down next to a woman with a baby in her arms. The baby stretched his plump little arms towards the girl, and seized the string of coins that hung down on to her blue *beshmet*. Maryana bent towards the child and glanced at Lukashka from the corner of her eyes. Lukashka just then was getting out from under his coat, out of the pocket of his black *beshmet*, a bundle of sweet-meats and seeds.

'There, I give them to all of you,' he said, handing the bundle to Ustenka and smiling at Maryana.

A confused expression again appeared on the girl's face. It was as though a mist gathered over her beautiful eyes. She drew her kerchief down from her lips, and leaning her head over the fair-skinned face of the baby that still held her by her coin necklace, she suddenly began to kiss it greedily. The baby pressed his little hands against the girl's high breasts, and opening his toothless mouth, screamed loudly.

'You're smothering the boy!' said the little one's mother, taking him away; and she unfastened

her *beshmet* to give him the breast. 'You'd better go and welcome the lad.'

'I'll only go and put up my horse, and then Nazarka and I will come back ; we'll make merry all night,' said Lukashka, touching his horse with his whip and riding away from the girls. Turning into a side street, he and Nazarka rode up to two huts that stood side by side.

'Here we are, all right, old fellow ! Be quick and come soon !' called Lukashka to his comrade, dismounting in front of one of the huts ; then he carefully led his horse in at the gate of the wattle fence of his own home.

'How d'you do, Stepka ?' he said to his dumb sister, who, smartly dressed like the others, came in from the street to take his horse ; and he made signs to her to take the horse to the hay, but not to unsaddle it.

The dumb girl made her usual humming noise, smacked her lips as she pointed to the horse, and kissed it on the nose, as much as to say that she loved it and that it was a fine horse.

'How d'you do, mother ? How is it that you have not gone out yet ?' shouted Lukashka, holding his gun in place, as he mounted the steps of the porch.

His old mother opened the door. 'Dear me ! I never expected, never thought, you'd come,' said the old woman. 'Why, Kirka said you'd not be here.'

'Go and bring some *chikhir*, mother. Nazarka is coming here and we will celebrate the feast day.'

'Directly, Lukashka, directly !' answered the old woman. 'Our women are making merry. I expect our dumb one has gone too.'

She took her keys, and hurriedly went to the outhouse.

Nazarka, after putting up his horse and taking the gun off his shoulder, returned to Lukashka's house and went in.

CHAPTER XXXVII

‘YOUR health !’ said Lukashka, taking from his mother's hands a cup filled to the brim with *chikhir*, and carefully raising it to his bowed head.

‘A bad business !’ said Nazarka. ‘You heard how Daddy Burlak said, “Have you stolen many horses ?” He seems to know !’

‘A regular wizard !’ Lukashka replied shortly. ‘But what of that !’ he added, tossing his head. ‘They are across the river by now. Go and find them.

‘Still, it's a bad lookout.’

‘What's a bad lookout ? Go and take some *chikhir* to him to-morrow, and nothing will come of it. Now let's make merry. Drink !’ shouted Lukashka, just in the tone in which old Eroshka uttered the word. ‘We'll go out into the street and make merry with the girls. You go and get some honey ; or no, I'll send our dumb wench. We'll make merry till morning.’

Nazarka smiled. ‘Are we stopping here long ?’ he asked.

‘Till we've had a bit of fun. Run and get some vodka. Here's the money.’

Nazarka ran off obediently to get the vodka from Yamka's.

Daddy Eroshka and Ergushov, like birds of

prey, scenting where the merry-making was going on, tumbled into the hut one after the other, both tipsy.

‘Bring us another half-pail,’ shouted Lukashka to his mother, by way of reply to their greeting.

‘Now then, tell us, where did you steal them, you devil?’ shouted Eroshka. ‘Fine fellow, I’m fond of you!’

‘Fond indeed . . .’ answered Lukashka, laughing, ‘carrying sweets from cadets to lasses! Eh, you old . . .’

‘That’s not true, not true! . . . Oh, Mark,’ and the old man burst out laughing. ‘And how that devil begged me. “Go,” he said, “and arrange it.” He offered me a gun! But, no. I’d have managed it, but I feel for you. Now tell us, where have you been?’ And the old man began speaking in Tartar.

Lukashka answered him promptly.

Ergushov, who did not know much Tartar, only occasionally put in a word in Russian:

‘What I say is, he’s driven away the horses. I know it for a fact,’ he chimed in.

‘Girey and I went together.’ (His speaking of Girey Khan as ‘Girey’ was, to the Cossack mind, evidence of his boldness.) ‘Just beyond the river he kept bragging that he knew the whole of the steppe, and would lead the way straight, but we rode on and the night was dark, and my Girey lost his way, and began wandering in a circle without getting anywhere: couldn’t find the village, and there we were. We must have gone too much to the right. I believe we wandered about wellnigh till midnight. Then, thank goodness, we heard dogs howling.’

‘Fools !’ said Daddy Eroshka. ‘There now, we too used to lose our way in the steppe. (Who the devil can follow it?) But I used to ride up a hillock and start howling like the wolves, like this !’ He placed his hands before his mouth, and howled like a pack of wolves, all on one note. ‘The dogs would answer at once. . . . Well, go on,—so you found them ?’

‘We soon led them away ! Nazarka was nearly caught by some Nogay women, he was !’

‘Caught, indeed,’ Nazarka, who had just come back, said in an injured tone.

‘We rode off again, and again Girey lost his way, and almost landed us among the sand-drifts. We thought we were just getting to the Terek, but we were riding away from it all the time !’

‘You should have steered by the stars,’ said Daddy Eroshka.

‘That’s what I say,’ interjected Ergushov.

‘Yes, steer when all is black ; I tried and tried all about . . . and at last I put the bridle on one of the mares, and let my own horse go free—thinking he’ll lead us out ; and what do you think ! he just gave a snort or two with his nose to the ground, galloped ahead, and led us straight to our village. Thank goodness !’

‘It was getting quite light. We barely had time to hide them in the forest. Nagim came across the river, and took them away.’

Ergushov shook his head. ‘It’s just what I said. Smart. Did you get much for them ?’

‘It’s all here,’ said Lukashka, slapping his pocket.

Just then his mother came into the room, and Lukashka did not finish what he was saying.

‘Drink !’ he shouted.

‘ We too, Girich and I, rode out late one night . . . ’ began Eroshka.

‘ Oh, bother, we’ll never hear the end of you ! ’ said Lukashka. ‘ I am going.’ And having emptied his cup and tightened the strap of his belt, he went out.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

It was already dark when Lukashka went out into the street. The autumn night was fresh and calm. The full golden moon floated up behind the tall dark poplars that grew on one side of the square. From the chimneys of the outhouses smoke rose and spread above the village, mingling with the mist. Here and there lights shone through the windows, and the air was laden with the smell of *kisyak*, grape-pulp, and mist. The sounds of voices, laughter, songs, and the cracking of seeds, mingled just as they had done in the daytime, but were now more distinct. Clusters of white kerchiefs and caps gleamed through the darkness near the houses and by the fences.

In the square, before the shop door, which was lit up and open, the black and white figures of Cossack men and maids showed through the darkness, and one heard from afar their loud songs and laughter and talk. The girls, hand in hand, went round and round in a circle, stepping lightly in the dusty square. A skinny girl, the plainest of them all, set the tune :

From beyond the wood, from the forest dark,
From the garden green, and the shady park,
There came out, there came two young fellows gay.
They were brave and smart, bach’lors both were they !

And they walked and walked, then stood still, each man,
So they stood and soon to dispute began !
Then a maid came out ; as she came along,
Said, ' To one of you, I shall soon belong !'
' Twas the fair-faced lad got the maiden fair,
Yes, the fair-faced lad with the golden hair !
Her right hand so white, in his own took he,
And he led her round, for his mates to see !
And he said, ' Have you, mates, in all your life,
Met a lass as fair as my little wife ? '

The old women stood round, listening to the songs. The little boys and girls ran about chasing one another in the dark. The men stood by, catching at the girls as the latter moved round, and sometimes breaking the ring and entering it. On the dark side of the doorway stood Beletsky and Olenin, in their Circassian coats and sheep-skin caps, and in a style of speech unlike that of the Cossacks talked together in low but distinct tones, conscious that they were attracting attention.

Next to one another, in the *horovod* circle, moved plump little Ustenka in her red *beshmet* and the stately Maryanka in her new smock and *beshmet*. Olenin and Beletsky were discussing how to snatch Ustenka and Maryanka out of the ring. Beletsky thought that Olenin wished only to amuse himself, while Olenin was expecting his fate to be decided. He wanted, at any cost, to see Maryanka alone that very day, and to tell her everything, and ask her whether she could and would be his wife. Although that question had long been answered in the negative in his own mind, he hoped he would be able to tell her all he felt, and that she would understand him.

' Why did you not tell me sooner ? ' said

Beletsky. 'I would have got Ustenka to arrange it for you. You are such a queer fellow ! . . . '

'What 's to be done ! . . . Some day, very soon, I 'll tell you all about it. Only now, for Heaven 's sake arrange so that she should come to Ustenka 's.'

'All right, that 's easily done ! Well, Maryanka, will you belong to the "fair-faced lad," and not to Lukashka ?' said Beletsky, speaking to Maryanka first for propriety 's sake, but, having received no reply, he went up to Ustenka and begged her to bring Maryanka home with her. He had hardly time to finish what he was saying before the leader began another song, and the girls started pulling each other round in the ring by the hand. They sang :

Past the garden, the garden,
 A young lad came strolling down,
 Up the street and through the town ;
 And the first time, as he passed,
 He did wave his strong right hand.
 As the second time he passed
 Waved his hat with silken band.
 And the third time as he passed
 He stood still : did not depart.
 He this time did not depart, but he made himself
 look smart.

'I have wished to come to thee
 Just to have a bit of talk.
 Why is it that thou, my dear,
 In the park don 't come to walk ?

'Come now, answer me, my dear,
 Dost thou hold me in contempt ?
 Later on, thou knowest, dear,
 Thou 'lt get sober and repent.
 Soon to woo thee, I will come,
 And when we shall married be,
 Thou shalt weep because of me !'

Though I knew what to reply,
Yet I dared not him deny,
No I dared not him deny !
In the park to walk went I,
In the park my lad to meet,
There my dear one I did greet.
As I bowed, so it befell,
To the ground my kerchief fell.

Up he picked it, where it lay,
‘ In thy white hand take it, pray.
Please accept it, dear, from me,
Say I am beloved by thee,
I don’t know at all, I fear,
What I am to give thee, dear !
To my dear I think I will
Of a shawl a present make—
Kisses five for it I’ll take.’

Lukashka and Nazarka broke into the ring and started walking about among the girls. Lukashka joined in the singing, taking seconds in his clear voice as he walked in the middle of the ring swinging his arms.

‘ Well, come in, one of you ! ’ he said. The other girls pushed Maryanka, but she would not enter the ring. The sound of shrill laughter, slaps, kisses, and whispers, mingled with the singing. As he went past Olenin, Lukashka gave a friendly nod.

‘ Dmitry Andreich ! Have you, too, come to have a look ? ’ he said.

‘ Yes,’ answered Olenin, dryly.

Beletsky stooped and whispered something into Ustenka’s ear. She had not time to reply till she came round again, when she said, ‘ All right, we’ll come.’

‘ And Maryanka too ? ’

Olenin stooped towards Maryanka. ‘ You’ll

come ? Please do, if only for a minute. I must speak to you.'

' If the other girls come, I will.'

' Will you answer my question ?' said he, bending towards her. ' You are in good spirits to-day.'

She had already moved past him. He went after her. ' Will you ?'

' What question ?'

' The one I asked you the other day,' said Olenin, stooping to her ear. ' Will you marry me ?'

Maryanka thought for a moment. ' I'll tell you,' said she, ' I'll tell you to-night,' and through the darkness her eyes gleamed brightly and kindly at the young man.

He still followed her. He enjoyed stooping closer to her.

But Lukashka, without ceasing to sing, suddenly seized her firmly by the hand and pulled her from her place in the ring of girls, into the middle. Olenin had only time to say, ' Come to Ustenka's,' and stepped back to his companion. The song came to an end. Lukashka wiped his lips, Maryanka did the same, and they kissed.

' No, no, kisses five !' said Lukashka. Chatter, laughter, and running about, succeeded to the rhythmic movements and sound. Lukashka, who seemed to have drunk a great deal, began to distribute sweetmeats to the girls. ' I offer them to every one !' he said, with proud, comically pathetic self-admiration. ' But any one who goes after soldiers, get out of the ring !' he suddenly added with an angry glance at Olenin.

The girls grabbed his sweetmeats from him, and laughing, struggled for them among themselves. Beletsky and Olenin stepped aside.

Lukashka, as if ashamed of his generosity, took off his cap and wiping his forehead with his sleeve, came up to Maryanka and Ustenka. 'Answer me, my dear, dost thou hold me in contempt?' he said, in the words of the song they had just been singing, and turning to Maryanka, he angrily repeated the words: 'Dost thou hold me in contempt? When we shall married be, thou shalt weep because of me!' he added, embracing Ustenka and Maryanka both together. Ustenka tore herself away, and swinging her arm gave him such a blow on the back that she hurt her hand.

'Well, are you going to have another turn?' he asked.

'The other girls may if they like,' answered Ustenka, 'but I am going home, and Maryanka was coming to our house too.'

With his arm still round her, Lukashka led Maryanka away from the crowd to the darker corner of a house.

'Don't go, Maryanka,' he said, 'let's have some fun for the last time. Go home and I will come to you!'

'What am I to do at home? Holidays are meant for merry-making. I am going to Ustenka's,' replied Maryanka.

'I'll marry you, all the same, you know!'

'All right,' said Maryanka, 'we shall see when the time comes.'

'So you are going,' said Lukashka sternly, and, pressing her close, he kissed her on the cheek.

'There, leave off! Don't bother,' and Maryanka, wrenching herself from his arms, moved away.

'Ah, my girl, it will turn out badly,' said

Lukashka reproachfully, and stood still shaking his head. 'Thou shalt weep because of me . . .' and turning away from her, he shouted to the other girls.

'Now then ! Play away !'

What he had said seemed to have frightened and vexed Maryanka. She stopped, 'What will turn out badly ?'

'Why, that !'

'That what ?'

'Why, that you keep company with a soldier-lodger and no longer care for me !'

'I'll care just as long as I choose. You're not my father, nor my mother. What do you want. I'll care for whom I like !'

'Well, all right . . .' said Lukashka, 'but remember !' He moved towards the shop. 'Girls !' he shouted, 'why have you stopped ? Go on dancing. Nazarka, fetch some more *chikhir*.'

'Well, will they come ?' asked Olenin, addressing Beletsky.

'They'll come directly,' replied Beletsky. 'Come along, we must prepare the ball.'

CHAPTER XXXIX

IT was already late in the night when Olenin came out of Beletsky's hut, following Maryanka and Ustenka. He saw in the dark street before him the gleam of the girl's white kerchief. The golden moon was descending towards the steppe. A silvery mist hung over the village. All was still ; there were no lights anywhere, and one heard only the retreating footsteps of the young women. Olenin's

heart beat fast. The fresh moist atmosphere cooled his burning face. He glanced at the sky and turned to look at the hut he had just come out of: the candle was already out. Then he again peered through the darkness at the girls' retreating shadows. The white kerchief disappeared in the mist. He was afraid to remain alone, he was so happy. He jumped down from the porch and ran after the girls.

‘Bother you, some one may see . . .’ said Ustenka.

‘Never mind !’

Olenin ran up to Maryanka, and embraced her. Maryanka did not resist.

‘Haven’t you kissed enough yet?’ said Ustenka. ‘Marry and then kiss, but now you’d better wait.’

‘Good-night, Maryanka, to-morrow I will come to see your father, and tell him. Don’t you say anything.’

‘Why should I !’ answered Maryanka.

Both the girls started running. Olenin went on by himself, thinking over all that had happened. He had spent the whole evening alone with her in a corner by the oven. Ustenka had not left the hut for a single moment, but had romped about with the other girls and with Beletsky all the time. Olenin had talked in whispers to Maryanka.

‘Will you marry me ?’ he had asked.

‘You’ll deceive me and not have me,’ she replied cheerfully and calmly.

‘But do you love me ? Tell me for God’s sake !’

‘Why shouldn’t I love you ? You don’t squint,’

answered Maryanka, laughing, and with her hard hands squeezing his . . .

‘What whi-ite, whi-i-ite, soft hands you’ve got—so like clotted cream,’ she said.

‘I am in earnest. Tell me, will you marry me?’

‘Why not, if father gives me to you?’

‘Well then, remember, I shall go mad if you deceive me. To-morrow I will tell your mother and father. I shall come and propose.’

Maryanka suddenly burst out laughing.

‘What’s the matter?’

‘It seems so funny!’

‘It’s true! I will buy a vineyard and a house, and will enroll myself as a Cossack.’

‘Mind you don’t go after other women, then. I am severe about that.’

Olenin joyfully repeated all these words to himself. The memory of them now gave him pain, and now such joy that it took away his breath. The pain was because she had remained as calm as usual while talking to him. She did not seem at all agitated by these new conditions. It was as if she did not trust him, and did not think of the future. It seemed to him that she only loved him for the present moment, and that in her mind there was no future with him. He was happy, because her words sounded to him true, and she had consented to be his.

‘Yes,’ thought he to himself, ‘we shall only understand one another when she is quite mine. For such love, there are no words. It needs life—the whole of life. To-morrow everything will be cleared up. I cannot live like this any longer; to-morrow I will tell everything to her father, to Beletsky, and to the whole village.’

Lukashka, after two sleepless nights, had drunk so much at the fête, that for the first time in his life, his feet would not carry him, and he slept in Yamka's house.

CHAPTER XL

THE next day Olenin awoke earlier than usual and immediately remembered what lay before him, and he joyfully recalled her kisses, the pressure of her hard hands, and her words, 'What white hands you have !'

He jumped up and wished to go at once to his hosts' hut to ask for their consent to his marriage with Maryanka. The sun had not yet risen, but it seemed that there was an unusual bustle in the street and side-street : people were moving about on foot and on horseback, and talking. He threw on his Circassian coat and hastened out into the porch. His hosts were not yet up. Five Cossacks were riding past and talking loudly together. In front rode Lukashka, on his broad-backed Kabarda horse. The Cossacks were all speaking and shouting so that it was impossible to make out exactly what they were saying.

' Ride to the Upper Post,' shouted one.

' Saddle, and catch us up, be quick,' said another.

' It 's nearer through the other gate ! '

' What are you talking about ! ' cried Lukashka, ' We must go through the middle gates, of course.'

' So we must, it 's nearer that way,' said one of the Cossacks, who was covered with dust and rode a perspiring horse.

Lukashka's face was red and swollen after the drinking of the previous night, and his cap was pushed to the back of his head. He was calling out with authority, as though he were an officer.

'What is the matter? Where are you going?' asked Olenin, with difficulty attracting the Cossacks' attention.

'We are off to catch *abreks*. They're hiding among the sand-drifts. We are just off, but there are not enough of us yet.' And the Cossacks continued to shout, more and more of them joining as they rode down the street. It occurred to Olenin that it would not look well for him to stay behind; besides he thought he could soon come back. He dressed, loaded his gun with bullets, jumped on to his horse, which Vanyusha had saddled more or less well, and overtook the Cossacks at the village gates. The Cossacks had dismounted, and filling a wooden bowl with *chikhir* from a little cask which they had brought with them, they passed the bowl round to one another, and drank to the success of their expedition. Among them was a smartly-dressed young Teacher, who happened to be in the village and who took command of the group of nine Cossacks who had joined for the expedition. All these Cossacks were privates, and although the Teacher assumed the airs of a commanding officer, they only obeyed Lukashka.

Of Olenin they took no notice at all, and when they had all mounted and started, and Olenin rode up to the Teacher and began asking him what was taking place, the Teacher, who was usually quite friendly, treated him with marked condescension. It was with great difficulty that

Olenin managed to find out from him what was happening. Scouts, who had been sent out to search for *abreks*, had come upon several hillsmen some six miles from the village. These *abreks* had taken shelter in pits and had fired at the scouts, declaring they would not surrender. A corporal, who had been scouting with two Cossacks, had remained to watch the *abreks* and had sent one Cossack back to get help.

The sun was just rising. Three miles beyond the village the steppe spread out and nothing was visible except the dry, monotonous, sandy, dismal plain covered with the footmarks of cattle, and here and there with tufts of withered grass, with low reeds in the flats, and rare, little-trodden footpaths, and the camps of the nomad Nogay tribe just visible far away. The absence of shade and the austere aspect of the place were striking. The sun always rises and sets red in the steppe. When it is windy whole hills of sand are carried by the wind from place to place. When it is calm, as it was that morning, the silence, uninterrupted by any movement or sound, is peculiarly striking. That morning in the steppe it was quiet and dull, though the sun had already risen. It all seemed specially soft and desolate. The air was hushed; the footfalls and the snorting of the horses were the only sounds to be heard, and even they quickly died away. The men rode almost silently. A Cossack always carries his weapons so that they neither jingle nor rattle. Jingling weapons are a terrible disgrace to a Cossack. Two other Cossacks from the village caught the party up and exchanged a few words. Lukashka's horse either stumbled or caught its foot in some grass,

and became restive—which is a sign of bad luck among the Cossacks, and at such a time was of special importance. The others exchanged glances, and turned away, trying not to notice what had happened. Lukashka pulled at the reins, frowned sternly, set his teeth, and flourished his whip above his head. His good Kabarda horse, prancing from one foot to another, not knowing with which to start, seemed to wish to fly upwards on wings. But Lukashka hit its well-fed sides with his whip once, then again, and a third time, and the horse, showing its teeth and spreading out its tail, snorted and reared and stepped on its hind legs a few paces away from the others. ‘Ah, a good steed that!’ said the Teacher. That he said *steed* instead of *horse*, indicated special praise.

‘A lion of a horse,’ assented one of the others, an old Cossack.

The Cossacks rode silently forward, now at a foot-pace, then at a trot, and these changes were the only incidents that for a moment interrupted the stillness and solemnity of their movements.

Riding through the steppe for about six miles, they passed nothing but one Nogay tent, placed on a cart and moving slowly along at a distance of about a mile from them. A Nogay family was moving from one part of the steppe to another. Afterwards they met two tattered Nogay women with high cheekbones, who with baskets on their backs were gathering dung left by the cattle that wandered over the steppe. The Teacher, who did not know their language well, tried to question them, but they did not understand him, and, obviously frightened, looked at one another.

Lukashka rode up to them both, stopped his horse and promptly uttered the usual greeting. The Nogay women were evidently relieved, and began speaking to him quite freely as to a brother.

'Ay-ay, kop abrek!' they said plaintively, pointing in the direction in which the Cossacks were going. Olenin understood that they were saying, *'Many abreks.'*

Never having seen an engagement of that kind, and having formed an idea of them only from Daddy Eroshka's tales, Olenin wished not to be left behind by the Cossacks, but wanted to see it all. He admired the Cossacks, and was on the watch, looking and listening and making his own observations. Though he had brought his sword and a loaded gun with him, when he noticed that the Cossacks avoided him he decided to take no part in the action, as in his opinion his courage had already been sufficiently proved when he was with his detachment, and also because he was very happy. Suddenly a shot was heard in the distance. The Teacher became excited, and began giving orders to the Cossacks as to how they should divide and from which side they should approach. But the Cossacks did not appear to pay any attention to these orders, listening only to what Lukashka said, and looking to him alone. Lukashka's face and figure were expressive of calm solemnity. He put his horse to a trot with which the others were unable to keep pace, and screwing up his eyes, he kept looking ahead.

'There's a man on horseback,' he said, reining in his horse and keeping in line with the others.

Olenin looked intently, but could not see anything.

The Cossacks soon distinguished two riders, and quietly rode straight towards them.

‘Are those the *abreks*?’ asked Olenin.

The Cossacks did not answer his question, which appeared quite meaningless to them. The *abreks* would have been fools to venture across the river on horseback.

‘That’s friend Rodka waving to us, I do believe,’ said Lukashka, pointing to the two mounted men, who were now clearly visible. ‘Look, he’s coming to us.’

A few minutes later it became plain that the two horsemen were the Cossack scouts. The corporal rode up to Lukashka.

CHAPTER XLI

‘**ARE** they far?’ was all Lukashka said.

Just then they heard a sharp shot, some thirty paces off. The corporal smiled slightly.

‘Our Gurka is having shots at them,’ he said, nodding in the direction of the shot.

Having gone a few paces farther, they saw Gurka sitting behind a sand-hillock and loading his gun. To while away the time, he was exchanging shots with the *abreks*, who were behind another sand-heap. A bullet came whistling from their side. The Teacher was pale and grew confused. Lukashka dismounted from his horse, threw the reins to one of the other Cossacks, and went up to Gurka. Olenin also dismounted, and bending down, followed Lukashka. They had hardly reached Gurka when two bullets whistled above them. Lukashka looked around laughing at

Olenin, and stooped a little. 'Look out, or they will kill you, Dmitry Andreich,' he said. 'You'd better go away—you have no business here.'

But Olenin wanted absolutely to see the *abreks*. From behind the mound he saw caps and muskets some two hundred paces off. Suddenly a little cloud of smoke appeared from thence, and again a bullet whistled past. The *abreks* were hiding in a marsh at the foot of the hill. Olenin was much impressed by the place in which they sat. In reality it was very much like the rest of the steppe, but because the *abreks* sat there, it seemed to detach itself from all the rest and to have become distinguished. Indeed it appeared to Olenin that it was the very spot for *abreks* to occupy. Lukashka went back to his horse, and Olenin followed him.

'We must get a hay-cart,' said Lukashka, 'or they will be killing some of us. There, behind that mound, is a Nogay cart with a load of hay.' The Teacher listened to him, and the Corporal agreed. The cart of hay was fetched, and the Cossacks, hiding behind it, pushed it forward. Olenin rode up a hillock from whence he could see everything. The hay-cart moved on, and the Cossacks crowded together behind it. The Cossacks advanced, but the Chechens, of whom there were nine, sat with their knees in a row and did not fire.

All was quiet. Suddenly from the Chechens arose the sound of a mournful song, something like Daddy Eroshka's 'Ay day, dalalay.' The Chechens knew that they could not escape, and to prevent themselves from being tempted to take to flight they had strapped themselves together,

knee to knee, had got their guns ready, and were singing their death-song.

The Cossacks with their hay-cart drew closer and closer, and Olenin expected the firing to begin any moment, but the silence was only broken by the *abreks'* mournful song. Suddenly the song ceased ; there was a sharp report, a bullet struck the front of the cart, and Chechen curses and yells broke the silence, and shot followed on shot, and one bullet after another struck the cart. The Cossacks did not fire, and were now only five paces distant.

Another moment passed, and the Cossacks with a whoop rushed out on both sides, from behind the cart—Lukashka in front of them. Olenin heard only a few shots, then shouting and moans. He thought he saw smoke and blood, and abandoning his horse and quite beside himself, he ran towards the Cossacks. Horror seemed to blind him. He could not make out anything, but understood that all was over. Lukashka, pale as death, was holding a wounded Chechen by the arms, and shouting, ‘Don’t kill him. I’ll take him alive !’ The Chechen was the red-haired man who had fetched his brother’s body away after Lukashka had killed him. Lukashka was twisting his arms. Suddenly the Chechen wrenched himself free and fired his revolver. Lukashka fell, and blood began to flow from his stomach. He jumped up, but fell again, swearing in Russian and in Tartar. More and more blood appeared on his clothes and under him. Some Cossacks approached him and began loosening his girdle. One of them, Nazarka, before beginning to help, fumbled for some time, unable to put his sword

in its sheath: it would not go the right way. The blade of the sword was blood-stained.

The Chechens, with their red hair and clipped moustaches, lay dead and hacked about. Only the one we know of, who had fired at Lukashka, though wounded in many places was still alive. Like a wounded hawk, all covered with blood (blood was flowing from a wound under his right eye), pale and gloomy, he looked about him with wide-open excited eyes and clenched teeth, as he crouched, dagger in hand, still prepared to defend himself. The Teacher went up to him as if intending to pass by, and with a quick movement shot him in the ear. The Chechen started up, but it was too late, and he fell.

The Cossacks, quite out of breath, dragged the bodies aside and took the weapons from them. Each of the red-haired Chechens had been a man, and each one had his own individual expression. Lukashka was carried to the cart. He continued to swear in Russian and in Tartar.

‘No fear, I’ll strangle him with my hands. *Anna seni!*’ he cried, struggling. But he soon became quiet from weakness.

Olenin rode home. In the evening he was told that Lukashka was at death’s door, but that a Tartar from beyond the river had undertaken to cure him with herbs.

The bodies were brought to the village office. The women and the little boys hastened to look at them.

It was growing dark when Olenin returned, and he could not collect himself after what he had seen. But towards night memories of the evening before came rushing to his mind. He looked out

of the window, Maryanka was passing to and fro, from the house to the cowshed, putting things straight. Her mother had gone to the vineyard and her father to the office. Olenin could not wait till she had quite finished her work, but went out to meet her. She was in the hut, standing with her back towards him. Olenin thought she felt shy.

‘Maryanka,’ said he, ‘I say, Maryanka ! May I come in ?’

She suddenly turned. There was a scarcely perceptible trace of tears in her eyes, and her face was beautiful in its sadness. She looked at him in silent dignity.

Olenin again said: ‘Maryanka, I have come——’

‘Leave me alone !’ she said. Her face did not change, but the tears ran down her cheeks.

‘What are you crying for ? What is it ?’

‘What ?’ she repeated in a rough voice.
‘Cossacks have been killed, that’s all.’

‘Lukashka ?’ said Olenin.

‘Go away ! What do you want ?’

‘Maryanka !’ said Olenin, approaching her.

‘You will never get anything from me !’

‘Maryanka, don’t speak like that,’ Olenin entreated.

‘Get away. I’m sick of you !’ shouted the girl, stamping her foot, and moved threateningly towards him. And her face expressed such abhorrence, such contempt, and such anger, that Olenin suddenly understood that there was no hope for him, and that his first impression of this woman’s inaccessibility had been perfectly correct.

Olenin said nothing more, but ran out of the hut.

CHAPTER XLII

FOR two hours after returning home he lay on his bed motionless. Then he went to his company commander and obtained leave to join the staff. Without taking leave of any one, and sending Vanyusha to settle his accounts with his landlord, he prepared to leave for the fort where his regiment was stationed. Daddy Eroshka was the only one to see him off. They had a drink, and then a second, and then yet another. Again, as on the night of his departure from Moscow, a three-horsed post-chaise stood waiting at the door. But Olenin did not confer with himself as he had done then, and did not say to himself that all he had thought and done here was 'not it'. He did not promise himself a new life. He loved Maryanka more than ever, and knew that he could never be loved by her.

' Well, good-bye, my lad ! ' said Daddy Eroshka. ' When you go on an expedition, be wise, and listen to my words—the words of an old man. When you are out on a raid, or the like (you know I'm an old wolf and have seen things), and when they begin firing, don't get into a crowd, where there are many men. When you fellows get frightened, you always try to get close together with a lot of others. You think it is merrier to be with others, but that's where it is worst of all ! They always aim at a crowd. Now I used to keep farther away from the others, and went alone, and I've never been wounded. Yet what things haven't I seen in my day ? '

‘ But you’ve got a bullet in your back,’ remarked Vanyusha, who was clearing up the room.

‘ That was the Cossacks fooling about,’ answered Eroshka.

‘ Cossacks ? How was that ?’ asked Olenin.

‘ Oh, just so. We were drinking. Vanka Sitkin, one of the Cossacks, got merry, and puff ! he gave me one from his pistol, just here.’

‘ Yes, and did it hurt ?’ asked Olenin. ‘ Vanyusha, will you soon be ready ?’ he added.

‘ Ah, where’s the hurry ! Let me tell you. When he banged into me, the bullet did not break the bone, but remained here. And I say : “ You’ve killed me, brother. Eh ? What have you done to me ? I won’t let you off ! You’ll have to stand me a pailful ! ” ’

‘ Well, but did it hurt ?’ Olenin asked again, scarcely listening to the tale.

‘ Let me finish. He stood a pailful ; and we drank it, but the blood went on flowing. The whole room was drenched and covered with blood.’ Grandad Burlak, he says, “ The lad will give up the ghost. Stand a bottle of the sweet sort, or we shall have you taken up ! ” They brought more drink, and boozed and boozed——’

‘ Yes, but did it hurt you much ?’ Olenin asked once more.

‘ Hurt, indeed ! Don’t interrupt : I don’t like it. Let me finish. We boozed and boozed till morning, and I fell asleep on the top of the oven, drunk. When I woke in the morning I could not unbend myself anyhow——’

‘ Was it very painful ?’ repeated Olenin, thinking that now he would at last get an answer to his question.

‘Did I tell you it was painful ? I did not say it was painful, but I could not bend and could not walk.’

‘And then it healed up ?’ said Olenin, not even laughing, so heavy was his heart.

‘It healed up, but the bullet is still there. Just feel it !’ And lifting his shirt he showed his powerful back, where just near the bone a bullet could be felt and rolled about.

‘Feel how it rolls,’ he said, evidently amusing himself with the bullet as with a toy. ‘There now, it has rolled to the back.’

‘And Lukashka, will he recover ?’ asked Olenin.

‘Heaven only knows ! There’s no doctor. They’ve gone for one.’

‘Where will they get one ? From Groznoe ?’ asked Olenin.

‘No, my lad. Were I the Tzar, I’d have hung all your Russian doctors long ago. Cutting is all they know ! There’s our Cossack Baklashka, no longer a real man now that they’ve cut off his leg ! That shows they’re fools ! What’s Baklashka good for now ? No, my lad, in the mountains there are real doctors. There was my chum, Vorchik, he was on an expedition and was wounded just here in the chest. Well, your doctors gave him up, but one of theirs came from the mountains and cured him ! They understand herbs, my lad !’

‘Come, stop talking rubbish,’ said Olenin. ‘I’d better send a doctor from head-quarters.’

‘Rubbish !’ the old man said, mockingly. ‘Fool, fool ! Rubbish. You’ll send a doctor !—If yours cured people, Cossacks and Chechens

would go to you for treatment, but, as it is, your officers and colonels send to the mountains for doctors. Yours are all humbugs, all humbugs.'

Olenin did not answer. He agreed, only too fully, that all was humbug in the world in which he had lived and to which he was now returning.

'How is Lukashka? You've been to see him?' he asked.

'He just lies as if he were dead. He does not eat nor drink. Vodka is the only thing his soul accepts. But as long as he drinks vodka, it's well. I'd be sorry to lose the lad. A fine lad—a brave, like me. I too lay dying like that once. The old women were already wailing. My head was burning. They had already laid me out under the holy icons. So I lay there and above me, on the oven—little drummers, no bigger than this, beat the tattoo. I shout at them and they drum all the harder.' (The old man laughed.)

'The women brought our church elder. They were getting ready to bury me. They said, "he defiled himself with worldly unbelievers; he made merry with women; he ruined people; he did not fast, and he played the *balalayka*." "Confess," they said. So I began to confess. "I've sinned!" I said. Whatever the priest said, I always answered "I've sinned." He began to ask me about the *balalayka*. "Where is the accursed thing," he says. "Show it me and smash it." But I say, "I've not got it." I'd hidden it myself in a net in the outhouse. I knew they could not find it. So they left me. Yet after all I recovered. When I went for my *balalayka*—What was I saying? he continued. 'Listen to me, and keep farther away from the other men, or you'll get killed

foolishly. I feel for you, truly : you are a drinker — I love you ! And fellows like you like riding up the mounds. There was one who lived here, who had come from Russia, he always would ride up the mounds (he called the mounds so funnily, “ hillocks ”). Whenever he saw a mound, off he’d gallop. Once he galloped off that way and rode to the top, quite pleased, but a Chechen fired at him, and killed him ! Ah, how well they shoot from their gun-rests, those Chechens ! Some of them shoot even better than I do. I don’t like it when a fellow gets killed so foolishly ! Sometimes I used to look at your soldiers and wonder at them. There’s foolishness for you ! They go, the poor fellows, all in a clump, and even sew red collars to their coats ! How can they help being hit ! One gets killed, they drag him away, and another takes his place ! What foolishness !’ the old man repeated, shaking his head. ‘ Why not scatter and go one by one ? So you just go like that, and they’ll not notice you. That’s what you must do.’

‘ Well, thank you ! Good-bye, Daddy. God willing, we may meet again,’ said Olenin, getting up and moving towards the passage. The old man, who was sitting on the floor, did not rise.

‘ Is that the way one says “ Good-bye ” ? Fool, fool !’ he began. ‘ Oh dear, what has come to people ! We’ve kept company, kept company for wellnigh a year, and now “ Good-bye ! ” and off he goes ! Why, I love you, and how I pity you ! You are so forlorn, always alone, always alone. You’re somehow so unsociable. At times I can’t sleep for thinking about you. I am so sorry for you. As the song has it :

It is very hard, dear brother,
In a foreign land to live.

So it is with you.'

' Well, good-bye,' said Olenin again.

The old man rose and held out his hand. Olenin pressed it and turned to go.

' Give us your mug, your mug ! ' And the old man took Olenin by the head with both hands and kissed him three times with wet moustaches and lips, and began to cry.

' I love you, good-bye ! '

Olenin got into the post-chaise.

' Well, is that how you're going ? You might give me something for a remembrance. Give me a gun ! What do you want two for ? ' said the old man, sobbing quite sincerely.

Olenin got out a musket and gave it to him.

' What a lot you've given the old fellow,' murmured Vanyusha, ' he'll never have enough ! A regular old beggar. They are all such irregular people,' he remarked, as he wrapped himself in his overcoat and took his seat on the box.

' Hold your tongue, swine ! ' exclaimed the old man, laughing. ' What a stingy fellow ! '

Maryanka came out of the cowshed, glanced indifferently at the post-chaise, bowed and went towards the hut.

' *La fille !*' said Vanyusha, with a wink, and burst out into a silly laugh.

' Go on ! ' shouted Olenin, angrily.

' Good-bye, my lad ! Good-bye. I won't forget you ! ' shouted Eroshka.

Olenin turned round. Daddy Eroshka was talking to Maryanka, evidently about his own affairs, and neither the old man nor the girl looked at Olenin.

THE RAID

A VOLUNTEER'S STORY

LIST OF CHARACTERS IN
THE RAID

CAPTAIN HLÓPOV (PÁSHENKA), a brave, unpretentious officer.
MARY IVÁNOVNA HLÓPOVA, his mother.
ENSIGN ALÁNIN (ANATÓL IVÁNICH), a young subaltern.
LIEUTENANT ROSENKRANZ.
SHÉVCHENKO.
COLONEL HASÁNOV (IVÁN MIKHÁYLOVICH).

THE RAID

A VOLUNTEER'S STORY

CHAPTER I

ON the twelfth of July, Captain Hlopov entered the low door of my earth-hut. He was wearing epaulettes and carrying a sword, which I had never seen him do before since I had reached the Caucasus.

‘I come straight from the colonel’s,’ he said in answer to my questioning look. ‘To-morrow our battalion is to march.’

‘Where to?’ I asked.

‘To N. N. The forces are to assemble there.’

‘And from there, I suppose, they will go into action?’

‘I expect so.’

‘In what direction? What do you think?’

‘What’s there to think about? I am telling you what I know! A Tartar galloped here last night and brought orders from the general for the battalion to march with two days’ rations of rusks. But where to? Why, and for how long? We do not ask, my friend; we are told to go—and that’s enough!’

‘But if you are to take only two days’ rations of rusks, it proves that the troops won’t be out longer than that.’

‘It proves nothing at all !’

‘How’s that ?’ I asked with surprise.

‘Because it is so. We went to Dargo, and took one week’s rations of rusks, but we stayed there nearly a month.’

‘Can I go with you ?’ I asked after a pause.

‘You could, no doubt. But my advice is, don’t. Why run risks ?’

‘Oh, but you must allow me not to take your advice. I have been here a whole month, solely on the chance of seeing an action, and you wish me to miss it !’

‘Well, if you like ! But really you had better stay behind. You could wait for us here, and might go hunting,—and we would go our way and it would be splendid,’ he said with such conviction that for a moment it really seemed to me too that it would be ‘splendid’. However, I told him decidedly that nothing would induce me to stay behind.

‘And what is there for you to see ?’ the captain went on, still trying to dissuade me. ‘Do you want to know what battles are like ? Read Mikhaylovsky Danilevsky’s *Description of War*. It’s a fine book ; it gives a detailed account of everything. It gives the position of every corps, and describes how battles are fought.’

‘All that does not interest me,’ I replied.

‘What is it then ? Do you simply wish to see how people are killed ?—— In 1832 we had a fellow here, also a civilian, a Spaniard I think he was. He took part with us in two campaigns, wearing some kind of blue mantle. Well, they did for the fine fellow. You won’t astonish any one here, friend !’

Humiliating though it was that the captain so misjudged my motives, I did not try to disabuse him.

‘Was he brave?’ I asked.

‘Heaven only knows: he always used to ride in front; and where there was firing, there he always was.’

‘Then he must have been brave,’ said I.

‘No. Pushing oneself in where you are not needed, does not prove you to be brave.’

‘Then what do you call brave?’

‘Brave?—Brave?’ repeated the captain, with the air of one to whom such a question presents itself for the first time. ‘He who does what he ought to do is brave,’ he said, after thinking awhile.

I remembered that Plato defines courage as ‘The knowledge of what should and what should not be feared,’ and despite the looseness and vagueness of the captain’s definition, I thought that the fundamental ideas of the two were not so different as they might appear, and that the captain’s definition was even more correct than that of the Greek philosopher. For if the captain had been able to express himself like Plato, he would no doubt have said that, ‘He is brave, who fears only what should be feared and not what should not be feared.’

I wished to explain my idea to the captain.

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘It seems to me that in every danger there is a choice; and a choice made under the influence of a sense of duty—is courage, but a choice made under the influence of a base motive—is cowardice. Therefore a man who risks his life from vanity, curiosity, or greed,

cannot be called brave ; while, on the other hand, one who avoids a danger from honest consideration for his family, or simply from conviction, cannot be called a coward.'

The captain looked at me with a curious kind of expression while I was speaking.

' Well, that I cannot prove to you,' he said, filling his pipe, ' but we have a cadet here who is fond of philosophizing. You should have a talk with him. He also writes verses.'

I had known of the captain before I left Russia, but I had only made his acquaintance in the Caucasus. His mother, Mary Ivanovna Hlopova, a small and poor landowner, lives within two miles of my estate. Before I left for the Caucasus, I had called on her. The old lady was very glad to hear that I should see her ' Pashenka ', by which pet name she called the grey-haired elderly captain, and that I, ' a living letter,' could tell him all about her, and take him a small parcel from her. Having treated me to excellent pie and smoked goose, Mary Ivanovna went into her bedroom and returned with a good-sized black amulet, to which was attached a black silk ribbon.

' Here, this is the icon of our Mother Mediatress of the Burning Bush,' said she, crossing herself and kissing the icon of the Virgin and placing it in my hands. ' Please let him have it. You see, when he went to the Caucasus I had a Mass said for him, and promised, if he remained alive and safe, to order this icon of the Mother of God for him. And now, for eighteen years, the Mediatress and the Holy Saints have had mercy on him : he has not been wounded once, and yet in what

battles has he not taken part?— What Michael, who went with him, told me, was enough, believe me, to make one's hair stand on end. You see, what I know about him is only from others. He, my pet, never writes me about his campaigns, for fear of frightening me.'

(After I reached the Caucasus I learnt, and then not from the captain himself, that he had been severely wounded four times, and of course never wrote to his mother either about his wounds or his campaigns.)

'So let him now wear this holy image,' she continued, 'I give it him with my blessing. May the most Holy Mediatress guard him. Especially when going to battle let him wear it. Tell him so, dear friend; say "Your mother wishes it."'

I promised to carry out her instructions carefully.

'I know you will grow fond of my Pashenka,' continued the old lady. 'He is such a splendid fellow! Will you believe it, he never lets a year pass without sending me some money, and he also helps my daughter, Annoushka, a good deal, and all out of his pay! I thank God for having given me such a child,' she continued with tears in her eyes.

'Does he often write to you?' I asked.

'Seldom, my dear: perhaps once a year. Only when he sends the money, not otherwise. He says, "If I don't write to you, mother, that means I am alive and well. Should anything befall me, which God forbid, they'll tell you without me."

When I handed his mother's present to the

captain (it was in my own quarters) he asked for a bit of paper, carefully wrapped it up, and then put it away. I told him many things about his mother's life. He remained silent, and when I had finished speaking he went to a corner of the room, and busied himself for what seemed a long time, filling his pipe.

'Yes, she's a splendid old woman!' he said from there, in rather a muffled voice. 'Will God let me ever see her again?' These simple words expressed much love and sadness.

'Why do you serve here?' I asked.

'One has to serve,' he answered with conviction. 'And to get double pay, as we do here in the Caucasus, means a great deal to poor men like myself.'

The captain lived economically, did not gamble, rarely went carousing, and smoked the cheapest tobacco (which, for some reason, he called home-grown tobacco). I had liked the captain before; and after this talk I felt a sincere regard for him. He had one of those simple, calm, Russian faces which are easy and pleasant to look straight in the eyes.

CHAPTER II

NEXT morning, at four o'clock, the captain came for me. He wore an old threadbare coat without epaulettes, wide Caucasian trousers, a white sheepskin cap, the wool of which had grown yellow and limp, and had a shabby Asiatic sword strapped round his shoulders. The small white horse he rode ambled along with short strides, hanging its head down and swinging its thin tail.

Although the worthy captain's figure was not very martial, nor even good-looking, it expressed such equanimity towards everything around him, that it involuntarily inspired respect.

I did not keep him waiting a single moment, but mounted 'my horse at once, and we rode together through the gates of the fortress. The battalion was some five hundred yards in front of us, and looked like a dense, oscillating, black mass. It was only possible to guess that it was an infantry battalion by the bayonets which looked like needles standing close together, and by the sounds of the soldiers' songs which occasionally reached us, the beating of a drum, and the delightful voice of the fifth company's second tenor, which had so often charmed me in the fortress. The road lay along the middle of a deep and broad ravine, by the side of a stream which had overflowed its banks. Flocks of wild pigeons whirled above it, now alighting on the rocky banks, now turning in the air in rapid circles and vanishing out of sight.

The sun was not yet visible, but the crest of the right side of the ravine was just beginning to be lit up. The grey and whitish rock, the yellowish-green moss, the dew-covered bushes of Christ's-Thorn, dogberry and dwarf elm, appeared extraordinarily distinct and salient in the golden morning light ; but the other side and the valley, wrapt in thick mist which floated in uneven strata, were damp and gloomy, and presented an indefinite mingling of colours : pale purple, almost black, dark green and white. Right in front of us, strikingly distinct against the dark-blue horizon, rose the bright dead-white

masses of the snowy mountains, with their shadows and outlines, fantastic and yet exquisite in every detail. Crickets, grasshoppers, and thousands of other insects, awoke in the tall grasses and filled the air with their clear and ceaseless sounds : it was as if innumerable tiny bells were ringing inside our very ears. The air was full of the scent of water, grass, and mist—the scent of a lovely early summer morning. The captain struck a light and lit his pipe, and the smell of his cheap tobacco and of the tinder seemed extraordinarily pleasant to me.

To overtake the infantry more quickly we left the road. The captain appeared more thoughtful than usual, did not take his Daghestan pipe out of his mouth, and at every step touched with his heels his horse, which swaying from side to side left a scarcely perceptible green track on the tall wet grass. From under its very feet, with the cry and the whirr of wings which involuntarily sends a thrill through every sportsman, rose a pheasant, which flew slowly upwards. The captain did not take the least notice of it.

We had nearly overtaken the battalion, when we heard the thud of a galloping horse behind us, and that same minute a good-looking youth, in an officer's uniform and a white sheepskin cap, galloped past us. In passing he smiled, nodded to the captain, and flourished his whip I had only time to notice that he sat his horse and held his reins with peculiar grace, that he had beautiful black eyes, a fine nose, and only the first signs of a moustache. What specially pleased me about him was that he could not repress a smile when he noticed that we admired

him. This smile alone showed him to be very young.

‘Where is he galloping to?’ muttered the captain, with a dissatisfied air, without taking the pipe out of his mouth.

‘Who is he?’ I asked.

‘Ensign Alanin, a subaltern in my company——. He came from the Cadet Corps only a month ago.’

‘I suppose he is going into action for the first time,’ I said.

‘That’s why he is so delighted,’ answered the captain, thoughtfully shaking his head.

‘Youth.’

‘But how could he help being pleased? I can fancy how interesting it must be for a young officer.’

The captain remained silent for a minute or two.

‘That is just why I say “Youth,”’ he added in a deep voice. ‘What is there to be pleased at without ever having seen the thing? When one has seen it many times, one is not so pleased. There are now, let us say, twenty of us officers here: one or other is sure to be killed or wounded, that is quite certain; to-day it may be I, to-morrow, he; the next day a third. So what is there to be pleased about?’

CHAPTER III

As soon as the bright sun appeared above the hill and lit up the valley along which we were marching, the wavy clouds of mist cleared away and it grew hot. The soldiers, with muskets and sacks on their shoulders, stepped slowly along the dusty road. Now and then Little-Russian words and laughter could be heard in their ranks. Several old soldiers in white blouses (most of them non-commissioned officers) walked together by the roadside smoking their pipes and conversing gravely. Three-horsed heavily-laden wagons moved steadily along, raising thick clouds of dust that hung motionless in the air. The officers rode on in front: some of them caracoled, i. e. they whipped their horse, made it take three or four leaps, and then, turning its head back, stopped abruptly. Others were occupied with the singers, who in spite of the heat and sultriness sang song after song. With the mounted Tartars, about two hundred yards ahead of the infantry, rode a tall handsome lieutenant in Asiatic costume, on a large white horse. He was known in the regiment as a desperate dare-devil who would spit the truth out at anybody. He wore a black tunic trimmed with gold braid, leggings to match, soft closely-fitting gold-braided oriental shoes, a yellow coat and a tall sheepskin cap pushed back from his forehead. Fastened to the silver strap that lay across his chest and back, he carried a powder-flask and a pistol behind him. Another pistol and a silver-mounted dagger hung from his girdle, and above these a sword in a red-

leather sheath and a musket in a black cover, were swung over his shoulder. By his clothing, by the way he sat his horse, by his general bearing, in fact by his every movement, one could see that he tried to resemble a Tartar. He even talked in a language I did not know, to the Tartars with whom he was riding, but from the bewildered and amused looks with which they glanced at one another, I surmised that they did not understand him either. He was one of our young officers, dare-devil braves who shape their lives on the model of Lermontov's and Marlinsky's heroes. These officers see the Caucasus only through the prism of such books as the *Heroes of our Times*, and *Mullah-Nur*¹, and are guided in their actions not by their own inclinations, but by the examples of their models.

The lieutenant, for instance, may perhaps have liked the company of well-bred women and of men of rank: generals, colonels, and aides-de-camp (it is even my conviction that he liked such society very much, for he was exceedingly ambitious), but he considered it his imperative duty to turn his roughest side to all important men, though he was strictly moderate in his rudeness to them; and when any lady came to the fortress, he considered it his duty to walk with his bosom-friends in a red shirt, and with slippers on his bare feet, before her window and to shout and swear at the top of his voice.

But all this he did not so much with the intention of offending her, as to let her see what beautiful white feet he had, and how easy it would be to fall in love with him, should he desire it. Or

¹ Novels by the above-mentioned authors.

he would often go with two or three friendly Tartars to the hills at night, to lie in ambush by the roadside, and to watch for passing hostile Tartars and to kill them : and though his heart told him more than once that there was nothing valiant in this, he considered himself bound to cause suffering to people, with whom he affected to be disillusioned, and whom he chose to hate and despise. He always carried two things : a large icon hanging round his neck, and a dagger which he wore over his shirt even when in bed. He sincerely believed that he had enemies. To persuade himself that he must avenge himself on some one and wash away some insult with blood was his greatest enjoyment. He was convinced that hatred, vengeance, and contempt for the human race, were the noblest and most poetic of feelings. But his mistress (a Circassian, of course) whom I happened to meet subsequently, used to say that he was the kindest and mildest of men, and that every evening he wrote down his dismal thoughts in his diary, as well as his accounts on ruled paper, and prayed to God on his knees. And how much he suffered, merely to appear in his own eyes what he wished to be ! For his comrades and the soldiers could never see him as he wished to appear. Once, on one of his nocturnal expeditions on the road with his bosom friends, he happened to wound a hostile Chechen with a bullet in the leg, and took him prisoner. After that, the Chechen lived for seven weeks with the lieutenant, who attended to him and nursed him as he would have nursed his dearest friend ; and when the Chechen recovered he gave him presents and set him free.

After that, during one of our expeditions, when the lieutenant was retreating with the soldiers of the cordon and was firing to keep back the foe, he heard some one among the enemy call him by name, and the man he had wounded rode forward and made signs to the lieutenant to do the same.

The lieutenant rode up to his friend and pressed his hand. The hillsmen stood some way back and did not fire, but scarcely had the lieutenant turned his horse to return, before several men shot at him and a bullet grazed the small of his back. Another time, at night, when a fire had broken out in the fortress and two companies of soldiers were putting it out, I myself saw how the tall figure of a man, mounted on a black horse, and lit up by the red glow of the fire, suddenly appeared among the crowd and, pushing through, rode up to the very flames. When quite close, the lieutenant jumped from his horse and rushed into the house, one side of which was burning. Five minutes later he came out, with singed hair and burned elbow, carrying in his bosom two pigeons which he had rescued from the flames.

His name was Rosenkranz ; yet he often spoke of his descent, deducing it somehow from the Varangians (the first rulers of Russia), and clearly demonstrated that he and his ancestors were pure Russians.

CHAPTER IV

THE sun had done half its journey, and through the glowing air cast its hot rays on the dry earth. The dark blue sky was perfectly clear: only the base of the snowy mountains began to clothe itself in lilac-tinged white clouds. The motionless air seemed full of transparent dust: the heat was becoming unbearable.

Half-way on their march, the troops reached a small stream and halted. The soldiers stacked their muskets and rushed to the stream; the commander of the battalion sat down in the shade on a drum, his full face assuming the correct expression denoting the greatness of his rank. He, together with some other officers, prepared to have a snack. The captain lay down on the grass under his company's wagon. The brave Lieutenant Rosenkranz and some other young officers disposed themselves on their outstretched cloaks and got ready for a drinking-bout, as could be gathered from the bottles and flasks arranged round them, as well as from the peculiar animation of the singers, who standing in a semicircle before them sang a Caucasian dance-song with a whistling obbligato interjected.

Shamyl, he began to riot
In the days gone by,
Try, ry, rataty,
In the days gone by !

Among these officers was the young ensign who had overtaken us in the morning. He was very amusing: his eyes shone, he spoke rather thickly, and he wished to kiss, and declare his love to, every one. Poor boy ! He did not know that he

might appear funny in such a position, that the frankness and the tenderness with which he assailed every one, predisposed them not to the affection he so longed for, but to ridicule ; nor did he know that when, quite heated, he at last threw himself down on the cloak, and rested on his elbow with his thick black hair thrown back, he looked uncommonly charming.

Two officers sat by the wagon, playing cards on a canteen box. I listened with curiosity to the conversation of the soldiers and officers, and attentively watched the expression of their faces, but could find absolutely no trace of the anxiety I myself experienced : jokes, laughter, and anecdotes, expressed the general carelessness and indifference to the impending danger : as if it were quite out of the question that some of us would never return along that road.

CHAPTER V

TOWARDS seven that evening, dusty and tired, we entered the wide fortified gate of Fort N. The sun was already setting, and threw its rosy slanting rays on the picturesque little batteries, and on the gardens with their tall poplars, which surrounded the fortress, on the yellow gleaming cultivated fields, and on the white clouds that, crowding round the snowy peaks, had, as if trying to imitate them, formed a range not less fantastic and beautiful.

On the horizon the new moon appeared, delicate as a little cloud. In the Tartar village that lay at the gates of the fortress, from the roof of a

hut, a Tartar was calling the faithful to prayer ; and our singers lifted their voices with renewed energy and vigour.

After a rest, and after tidying myself up a bit, I went to an adjutant of my acquaintance, to ask him to let the general know of my intention. On my way from the suburb where I had put up, I noticed in Fort N. something I did not at all expect : a pretty little brougham, which overtook me, in which I caught sight of a fashionable bonnet, and from which I overheard some French words. The sounds of some 'Lizzie' or 'Kitty' polka, played on a bad ramshackle piano, reached me through the windows of the commander's house. In a little grocery and wine shop which I passed, some clerks with cigarettes in their fingers sat drinking wine : and I heard one of them say to another, 'No, excuse me, as for politics, Mary Gregoryevna is first among our ladies.' A Jew in a worn-out coat, with a bent back and sickly countenance, was dragging along a wheezy barrel-organ, and the whole suburb resounded with the tones of the finale of 'Lucia'. Two women in rustling dresses, with silk kerchiefs on their heads, and carrying bright-coloured parasols, passed by, along the planks that did duty for a pavement. Two girls, one in a pink, the other in a blue, dress, stood bareheaded beside the earth-embankments of a low-roofed house, and shrieked with high-pitched, forced laughter, evidently to attract the attention of passing officers. The officers, dressed in new uniforms, with glittering epaulettes and white gloves, flaunted along the street and on the boulevard. I found my acquaintance on the ground-floor

of the general's house. I had scarcely had time to explain my wishes to him, and to get his reply, that they could easily be fulfilled, when the pretty little brougham I had noticed outside rattled past the window we were sitting at. A tall well-built man, in an infantry major's uniform and epaulettes, got out and entered the house.

'Oh, please excuse me,' said the adjutant, rising; 'I must go and announce them to the general.'

'Who is it?' I asked.

'The countess,' he replied and, buttoning his uniform, rushed upstairs.

A few minutes later a very handsome man in a frock coat without epaulettes, a white cross in his buttonhole, went out into the porch. He was not tall, but remarkably good-looking. He was followed by the major, the adjutant, and a couple of other officers. The general's gait, voice, and all his movements, showed him to be a man well aware of his own value.

'*Bonsoir, Madame la Comtesse*,' he said, offering his hand through the carriage-window.

A small hand in a kid glove pressed his, and a pretty smiling face in a yellow bonnet appeared at the carriage-window.

Of the conversation, which lasted several minutes, I only overheard the general say laughingly, as I passed by :

'*Vous savez que j'ai fait vœu de combattre les infidèles : prenez donc garde de le devenir.*'

A laugh answered from inside the carriage.

'*Adieu donc, cher Général !*'

'*Non, à revoir*,' said the general, ascending the steps of the porch. '*N'oubliez pas, que je m'invite pour la soirée de demain.*'

The carriage rattled off. 'Here again', I thought as I walked home, 'is a man who possesses all that Russians strive after: rank, riches, distinction; and this man, on the day before an engagement, the outcome of which is known only to God, jokes with a pretty woman and promises to have tea with her next day, just as if they had met at a ball!'

At that same adjutant's, I met a young man who surprised me even more. It was a young lieutenant of the K. regiment, who was noted for his almost feminine meekness and timidity, and who had come to the adjutant to pour out his vexation and resentment against those who, he said, had intrigued against him to keep him from taking part in the impending action. He said it was mean to behave in that way, that it was unfriendly, and that he would not forget it, and so forth. Intently as I watched the expression of his face and listened to the sound of his voice, I could not help feeling convinced that he was not pretending, but was genuinely filled with indignation and grief because he was not allowed to go and shoot Circassians and expose himself to their fire. He was grieved like a little child who has been unjustly birched. I could make nothing at all of it.

CHAPTER VI

THE troops were to march at ten in the evening. At half-past eight I mounted and rode to the general's, but, thinking that he and his adjutant were busy, I tied my horse to the fence and sat down on an earth-bank, intending to catch the general as soon as he came out.

The heat and glare of the sun were now replaced by the coolness of night and the soft light of the young moon, which had formed a pale glimmering semicircle around itself on the deep blue of the starry sky, and was already setting. Lights appeared in the windows of the houses, and shone through cracks in the shutters of the dug-outs. The stately poplars, beyond the white moonlit dug-outs, with their cane-thatched roofs, looked darker and taller than ever against the horizon. The long shadows of the houses, the trees and the fences, stretched out daintily on the dusty road. From the river came the ringing sounds of frogs;¹ along the street came the sound of hurried steps and voices talking, or the galloping of a horse, and from the suburb the tones of a barrel-organ now playing 'The winds are blowing', now some 'Aurora Waltz'.

I will not say what meditations I was absorbed in; first, because I should be ashamed to confess the gloomy waves of thought that insistently flooded my soul while around me I noticed nothing but gaiety and joy; and secondly, because it would not suit my story. I was so deep in thought that I did not even notice the bell strike eleven, and the general with his suite ride past me.

The rear-guard was still within the fortress. I had great difficulty in making my way across the bridge among the guns, ammunition wagons, the carts of the different companies, and the officers noisily giving orders. Once outside the fortress gates, I passed at a trot the troops, who,

¹ Frogs in the Caucasus make a noise quite different from the croaking of frogs elsewhere.—L.T.

stretched out over nearly three-quarters of a mile, were moving silently on through the darkness, and I overtook the general.

As I rode past the guns drawn out in single file, and the officers who rode between the guns, I was hurt, as by a discord in the quiet and solemn harmony, by the German accents of a voice shouting, ' You devil, a linstock ! ' and the voice of a soldier hurriedly calling, ' Shevchenko, the lieutenant wants a light ! '

The greater part of the sky was now overcast with long strips of dark grey clouds ; only here and there a few stars twinkled dimly among them. The moon had already sunk behind the near horizon of the black hills, visible to the right, and threw a faint trembling light on their peaks in sharp contrast to the impenetrable darkness which enveloped their base. The air was so warm and still that it seemed as if not one blade of grass, not one cloudlet, were moving. It was so dark that even objects close at hand could not be distinguished. On the sides of the road I seemed to see now rocks, now animals, now some strange kind of men, and I discovered that they were merely bushes only when I heard them rustle, or felt the dew with which they were sprinkled. In front of me I saw a dense heaving wall, followed by some dark moving spots : these were the cavalry vanguard, and the general with his suite. Another similar dark mass, only lower, moved beside us,—that was the infantry. The silence that reigned over the whole division was so great that all the mingling sounds of night, with their mysterious charm, were distinctly audible : the far-off, mournful

howling of jackals, now like agonized weeping, then like chuckling ; the monotonous, resounding song of crickets, frogs, and quails ; a sort of rumbling I could not account for at all, but which seemed to draw nearer ; scarcely audible motions of Nature, which can neither be understood nor defined, mingled into one beautiful harmony, which we call the stillness of night. This stillness was interrupted by, or rather combined with, the dull thud of hoofs and the rustling of the tall grass, produced by the slowly advancing detachment.

Only very occasionally you heard the clang of a heavy gun, the sound of bayonets striking together, hushed voices, or the snorting of a horse. Nature seemed to breathe with pacifying beauty and power. Can it be that there is not room for all men on this beautiful earth, under those immeasurable starry heavens ? Can it be possible that in the midst of this entrancing Nature, feelings of hatred, vengeance, or the passion for exterminating their fellows, can endure in the souls of men ? All that is unkind in the hearts of men, ought, one would think, to vanish at the touch of Nature : that most direct expression of beauty and goodness.

CHAPTER VII

WE had been riding for more than two hours. I was beginning to shiver and feel drowsy. Through the gloom I still seemed to see the same indefinite forms ; a little way in front, the same black wall and the moving spots. Close in front of me I saw the crupper of a white horse which swung its

tail and threw its hind legs far apart ; the back of a white Circassian coat, on which could be discerned a musket in a black case, and the glimmering butt of a pistol in an embroidered sheath ; the glow of a cigarette illumined a fair moustache, a beaver collar, and a white chamois glove. Every now and then, I leant over my horse's neck, shutting my eyes, and forgetting myself for a few minutes ; then, startled by the familiar tramping and rustling, I glanced round, and felt as if I were standing still, and the black wall in front was moving towards me, or that it had stopped and I should in a moment ride into it. At one such moment the rumbling which increased and seemed to approach, and the cause of which I could not guess, struck me forcibly : it was the sound of water. We were entering a deep gorge and approaching a mountain-stream that was overflowing its banks. The rumbling increased, the damp grass grew thicker and taller and the bushes closer, while the horizon gradually narrowed. Now and then, here and there against the dark background of the hills, bright lights flashed and instantly vanished.

‘ Tell me, please, what are those lights ? ’ I inquired, in a whisper, of a Tartar riding beside me.

‘ What, don’t you know ? ’ he replied.

I don’t.’

It’s the hillsmen have tied straw to poles and are waving the lights about.’

‘ Why are they doing it ? ’

‘ So that every one should know the Russians have come. Oh ! oh ! what a bustle is going on now in the *aouls* ; everybody’s dragging his belongings into the ravine,’ he said, laughing.

‘ Why, do they already know in the mountains that a detachment is on its way ? ’ I asked him.

‘ Eh, how can one help knowing ? They always know ; our people are like that.’

‘ Then Shamil¹ too is preparing for action ? ’ I asked.

‘ No,’ he answered, shaking his head, ‘ Shamil won’t go into action ; Shamil will send his *naibs*,² and he himself will look on through a telescope from above.’

‘ Does he live far away ? ’

‘ Not far. To the left, some eight miles.’

‘ How do you know ? ’ I asked. ‘ Have you been there ? ’

‘ I have ; our people have all been.’

‘ Have you seen Shamil ? ’

‘ Eh ! such as we don’t see Shamil ! There are a hundred, three hundred, a thousand *murids*, all round him, and Shamil’s in the centre,’ he said, with an expression of servile admiration.

Looking up, it was possible to discern that the sky, now cleared, was beginning to grow lighter in the East, and the Pleiades to sink towards the horizon ; but the ravine through which we were marching was still damp and gloomy.

Suddenly, a little way in front of us, several lights flashed through the darkness ; at the same moment some whizzing bullets flew past, and shots and piercing cries resounded amid

¹ Shamil was the leader (1834–1859) of the Caucasian hill-tribes in their prolonged resistance to Russia. See also note on p. 134.

² A *naib* was a man to whom Shamil had entrusted some administrative office.—L.T.

the surrounding silence. It was the enemy's advanced picket. The Tartars that composed it raised a hue and cry, fired at random, and then ran in different directions.

All became silent again. The General called up an interpreter. A Tartar in a white Circassian coat rode up to him and, gesticulating and whispering, talked with him for a while.

'Colonel Hasanov ! Order the cordon to take open order,' commanded the General, with a quiet but distinct drawl.

The detachment advanced to the river; the black hills and gorges were left behind; the dawn appeared. The vault of the heavens, in which a few pale stars were still dimly visible, seemed higher; the sunrise glow beyond shone brightly in the east; a fresh, penetrating breeze blew from the west, and the white mists rose like vapour above the rushing stream.

CHAPTER VIII

THE guide pointed out a ford, and the cavalry vanguard, followed by the General, began crossing the stream. The water, which reached to the horses' chests, rushed with tremendous force between the white boulders, which here and there appeared on a level with its surface, and formed foaming and gurgling ripples round the horses' legs. The horses, surprised by the noise of the water, lifted their heads and pricked their ears, but stepped evenly and carefully, against the current, on the uneven bottom of the stream. Their riders lifted their feet and weapons. The

infantry, literally in nothing but their shirts, linked arm-in-arm by twenties, and holding above the water their muskets, to which their bundles of clothing were fastened, made great efforts (as the strained expression of their faces showed) to resist the force of the current. The mounted artillerymen, with loud shouts, drove their horses at a trot into the water. The guns and the green ammunition-wagons, over which the water occasionally splashed, rang against the stony bottom, but the good little horses, churning the water, pulled at the traces in unity and, with dripping manes and tails, clambered out on the opposite bank.

As soon as the crossing was accomplished, the General's face suddenly assumed a meditative and serious look, and he turned his horse and, followed by the cavalry, rode at a trot down a broad glade which opened out before us in the midst of the forest. A cordon of mounted Cossacks was scattered along the skirts of the forest.

In the woods we noticed a man on foot dressed in a Circassian coat and wearing a tall cap,—then a second and a third. One of the officers said: 'Those are Tartars.' Then a puff of smoke appeared from behind a tree, a shot, and another.... Our rapid fire drowns the enemy's. Only now and then a bullet, with a slow sound like the buzzing of a bee's wings, passes by and proves that the firing is not all ours! Now the infantry at a run, and the guns at a trot, pass into the cordon. You can hear the boom of the guns, the metallic sounds of flying grape-shot, the hissing of rockets and the crackle of muskets. Over the wide glade you can see on all sides

cavalry, infantry, and artillery. Puffs of smoke mingle with the dew-covered verdure and the mist. Colonel Hasanov, approaching the General at full gallop, suddenly reins in his horse.

‘Your excellency, shall we order the cavalry to charge?’ he says, raising his hand to his cap; ‘the enemy’s colours are in sight,’ and he points with his whip to some mounted Tartars, in front of whom ride two men on white horses, with bits of blue and red stuff fastened to poles in their hands.

‘Go, and God be with you, Ivan Mikhaylovich!’ says the General. The Colonel turns his horse sharply round, draws his sword, and shouts ‘Hurrah !’

‘Hurrah ! Hurrah ! Hurrah !’ comes from the ranks, and the cavalry gallop after him. . . .

Every one looks on with interest: there is a pennon, another, a third and a fourth. . . .

The enemy, not waiting for the attack, hides in the wood and thence opens a small-arms fire. Bullets come flying more and more frequently. ‘*Quel charmant coup d’œil !*’ says the General, slightly rising, English fashion, in his saddle on his slim-legged black horse.

‘*Charmant !*’ answered the Major, rolling his r’s; and striking his horse, he rides up to the General: ‘*C’est un vrai plaisir, que la guerre dans un aussi beau pays,*’ he says.

‘*Et surtout en bonne compagnie,*’ replies the General, with a pleasant smile. The Major bows.

At that moment a hostile cannon-ball, with a disagreeable whiz, flies past and strikes something. We hear behind us the moan of a wounded man.

This moaning strikes me in so strange a manner that the warlike scene instantly loses for me all its charm. But no one, except myself, seems to notice it: the Major laughs with apparently greater gusto; another officer repeats with perfect calm the first words of a sentence he was just saying; the General looks the other way, and with the quietest smile says something in French. 'Shall we reply to their fire?' asks the commander of the artillery, galloping up.

'Yes, frighten them a bit!' carelessly replies the General, lighting a cigar.

The battery takes up its position, and the firing begins. The earth groans under the shots; fires flash incessantly, and smoke, through which it is scarcely possible to distinguish the artillerymen moving round their guns, veils your sight.

The *aoul* has been bombarded. Colonel Hasanov rides up again, and at the General's command gallops towards the *aoul*. The war-cry is raised again, and the cavalry disappears in the cloud of dust which it raises.

The spectacle was truly magnificent. The one thing that spoilt the general impression for me, who took no part in the affair and was unaccustomed to it, was that this movement, and the animation and the shouting, appeared unnecessary. Involuntarily the comparison suggested itself to me of a man swinging his arms from the shoulders to cut the air with an axe.

CHAPTER IX

OUR troops had taken possession of the village, and not a single soul of the enemy remained in it, when the General and his suite, with which I had mingled, rode up to it.

The long, clean huts, with their flat earthen roofs and shapely chimneys, stood on irregular stony mounds, between which flowed a small stream.

On one side you saw green gardens with enormous pear and plum trees, brightly lit up by the sun ; on the other, strange upright shadows, and the perpendicular stones of the cemetery, and long poles, with balls and many coloured flags attached to their ends. (These marked the graves of the *dzhigits*.)

The troops were drawn up outside the gates.

A moment later, dragoons, Cossacks, and infantry spread with evident joy through the crooked lanes, and in an instant the empty village was animated again. There crashed a roof : an axe rings against the hard wood of a door that is being forced open : here a stack of hay, a fence, a hut, is set on fire, and a pillar of thick smoke rises up in the clear air. Here is a Cossack dragging along a sack of flour and a carpet ; there a soldier, with a delighted look on his face, brings a tin basin and some rag out of a hut ; another with outstretched arms is trying to catch two hens that are struggling and cackling beside a fence : a third has somewhere discovered an enormous pot of milk and,

after drinking some of it, throws the rest on to the ground amid loud laughter.

The battalion with which I had come from Fort N. was also in the *aoul*. The Captain sat on the roof of a hut and sent thin whiffs of cheap tobacco smoke through his short pipe, with such an expression of indifference on his face that on seeing him I forgot that I was in a hostile *aoul*, and felt quite at home.

‘Ah, you are here too?’ he said when he noticed me.

The tall figure of Lieutenant Rosenkranz flitted here and there in the village. He unceasingly gave orders, and appeared exceedingly engrossed in his task. I saw him come with a triumphant air out of a hut, followed by two soldiers leading an old Tartar. The old man, whose only clothing consisted of a mottled tunic all in rags and patchwork trousers, was so frail that his arms, tightly-bound behind his bent back, seemed scarcely to hold to his shoulders, and he could hardly drag his bare crooked legs along. His face, and even part of his shaven head, were deeply furrowed. His wry toothless mouth kept moving beneath his short-cut moustache and beard, as if he were chewing something; but in his red lashless eyes there still sparkled a gleam, and they clearly expressed an old man’s indifference to life.

Rosenkranz, through an interpreter, asked him why he had not gone away with the others.

‘Where should I go?’ he answered, looking quietly away.

‘Where the others have gone,’ some one remarked.

‘The braves have gone to fight the Russians, but I am an old man.’

‘Are you not afraid of the Russians?’

‘What will the Russians do to me? I am old,’ he repeated, again glancing carelessly round the circle that had formed about him.

Later, as I was returning, I saw that old man bareheaded, with his arms tied, being jolted along behind the saddle of a Cossack, and he was looking round with the same expression of indifference on his face. He was wanted for the exchange of prisoners.

I climbed on to the roof and sat down beside the Captain.

‘There don’t seem to have been many of the enemy,’ I said, wishing to know his opinion of the action that had taken place.

‘The enemy?’ he repeated with surprise. ‘The enemy was not there at all! Do you call that the enemy? . . . Wait till the evening, when we go back, and you will see how they will speed us on our way: what a lot of them will pour out from there,’ he said, pointing to a thicket that we had passed in the morning. ‘What is that?’ I asked anxiously, interrupting the Captain and pointing to a group of Don Cossacks, who had collected round something not far from us.

A sound of something like a child’s cry came from there, and the words ‘Stop . . . don’t hack it . . . they’ll see . . . Have you a knife, Evstigneich? . . . Lend a knife . . .’

‘They are up to something, the scoundrels . . .’ calmly replied the Captain.

But at that moment the young ensign, his

bonny face flushed and frightened, came suddenly running from behind a corner, and rushed, waving his arms, towards the Cossacks.

‘Don’t touch it! Don’t kill it!’ he cried in a childish voice.

Seeing the officer, the Cossacks stepped apart, and released a little white kid. The young ensign was quite abashed, muttered something, and stopped before us with a confused face.

Seeing the Captain and me on the roof, he blushed still more, and ran leaping towards us.

‘I thought they were going to kill a child,’ he said with a bashful smile.

CHAPTER X

THE General went ahead with the cavalry. The battalion with which I had come from Fort N. remained in the rear-guard. Captain Hlopov’s and Lieutenant Rosenkranz’s battalions retired together.

The Captain’s prophecy was quite correct. No sooner had we entered the narrow thicket which he had mentioned, than on both sides of us we caught glimpses of hillsmen, mounted and on foot, and so near were they that I could distinctly see how some of them ran stooping, rifle in hand, from behind one tree to another.

The Captain took off his cap and piously crossed himself, some of the older soldiers did the same. From the wood were heard war-cries, and the words ‘*Iay giaour*’. ‘*Urus! iay!*’ Dry short rifle-shots, fast following one another,

whizzed on both sides of us. Our men answered silently with a running fire, and only now and then remarks, like the following, were made in the ranks: 'See where he¹ fires from. It's all right for him inside the wood. We ought to use the cannons', and so forth.

Our ordnance was brought out and, after some grape-shot had been fired, the enemy seemed to grow weaker; but a moment later, and at every step taken by our troops, the enemy's fire again grew hotter, and the shouting louder.

We had hardly gone seven hundred yards from the village before enemy cannon-balls began whistling over our heads. I saw a soldier killed by a ball.... But why should I describe the details of that terrible picture, which I myself would give much to be able to forget! Lieutenant Rosenkranz kept firing his musket and incessantly shouted in a hoarse voice at the soldiers, and galloped from one end of the cordon to the other. He was rather pale, and this was very becoming to his warrior countenance.

The good-looking young Ensign was in raptures: his beautiful dark eyes shone with daring, his lips were slightly smiling, and he kept riding up to the Captain and begging permission to charge. 'We will repel them,' he said persuasively, 'we certainly will.'

'It's not necessary,' abruptly replied the Captain. 'We must retreat.'

The Captain's company held the skirts of the wood, the men lying down and replying to the enemy's fire.

¹ *He* is a collective noun by which the soldiers indicate the enemy.—L. T.

The Captain, in his shabby coat and shabby cap, sat silent on his white horse, with loose reins, bent knees, his feet in the stirrups, and did not stir from his place. (The soldiers knew and did their work so well that there was no need to give them any orders.) Only at rare intervals he raised his voice to shout at those who exposed their heads.

There was nothing very martial about the Captain's appearance, but there was something so true and simple in it, that I was extremely struck by it. 'It is he who is really brave,' I involuntarily said to myself. He was just the same as I had always seen him: the same calm movements, the same guileless expression on his plain but frank face; only his eyes, which were brighter than usual, showed the concentration of one quietly engaged on his duties. 'As I had always seen him,' is easily said, but how many different variations have I noticed in the behaviour of others; one wishing to appear quieter, another sterner, a third merrier, than usual; but the Captain's face showed that he did not even see why he should appear anything but what he was.

The Frenchman who said at Waterloo, '*La garde meurt, mais ne se rend pas*,' and other, particularly French, heroes who uttered memorable sayings, were brave, and really uttered remarkable words, but between their courage and the Captain's there was this difference, that even if a great saying had, in any circumstance, stirred the soul of my hero, I am convinced he would not have uttered it: first because, by uttering a great saying he would have feared to spoil a great deed; and secondly because, when a man

feels within himself the capacity to perform a great deed, no talk of any kind is needed. That, I think, is a peculiar and a lofty characteristic of Russian courage ; and, if that is so, how can a Russian heart help aching when our young Russian warriors utter trivial French phrases, intended to imitate antiquated French chivalry ?

Suddenly, from the side where our bonny Ensign stood with his platoon, we heard a not very hearty or loud 'Hurrah.' Looking round to where the shout came from, I saw some thirty soldiers, with sacks on their shoulders and muskets in their hands managing with very great difficulty to run across a ploughed field. They kept stumbling, but nevertheless ran on and shouted. Before them, sword in hand, galloped the young Ensign.

They all disappeared into the wood. . . .

After a few minutes of whooping and clatter, a frightened horse ran out of the wood, and soldiers appeared bringing back the dead and wounded. Among the latter was the young Ensign ! Two soldiers supported him under his arms. He was as pale as a sheet, and his pretty head, on which only a shadow remained of the warlike enthusiasm which had animated it a few minutes before, was sunk in a dreadful way between his shoulders and drooped on his chest. There was a small spot of blood on the white shirt beneath his unbuttoned coat.

'Ah, what a pity,' I said, involuntarily turning away from this sad spectacle.

'Of course it's a pity,' said an old soldier, who stood leaning on his musket beside me with a gloomy expression on his face. 'He's not afraid of any-

thing; how can one do such things?' he added, looking intently at the wounded lad. 'Young and still foolish, and now he has paid for it!'

'And you?' I asked, 'Are you afraid?'

'What do you expect?'

CHAPTER XI

FOUR soldiers were carrying the Ensign on a stretcher, and behind them an ambulance soldier led a thin broken-winded horse with two green boxes containing surgical appliances on its back. They waited for the doctor. Officers rode up to the stretcher, and tried to cheer up and comfort the wounded lad.

'Well, friend Alanin, it will be some time before you will dance again with castanets,' said Lieutenant Rosenkranz, riding up to the stretcher with a smile.

He probably imagined that these words would keep up the young Ensign's spirits, but, as far as one could judge by the latter's coldly sad look, the words had not the desired effect.

The Captain rode up too. He looked intently at the wounded man, and his usually calm and cold face expressed sincere sympathy. 'Well my dear Anatol Ivanich,' said he, in a voice of tender sympathy such as I never expected from him, 'evidently it is God's will.'

The wounded lad looked round, and his pale face lit up with a sad smile, 'Yes, I disobeyed you.'

'Say rather, it was the will of God,' repeated the Captain.

The doctor arrived, and, having taken from his assistant bandages, a probe, and another implement, rolled up his sleeves and stepped up to the Ensign with an encouraging smile. 'So it seems they have made a hole in a sound spot, for you too,' he said in a carelessly playful tone. 'Let me see.'

The Ensign obeyed, but the look which he gave the merry doctor expressed astonishment and reproof, which the latter did not notice. The doctor began probing the wound and examining it from all sides; but the wounded Ensign, driven beyond the limits of endurance, pushed away the doctor's hand with a deep groan.

'Leave me alone,' he said in a scarcely audible voice. 'I shall die anyway.'

With those words he fell back, and five minutes later, when I passed the group that had formed round him, and asked a soldier, 'How is the Ensign?' the answer was, 'Passing away.'

CHAPTER XII

It was late in the day when the detachment, with songs, and formed into a broad column, approached the Fort. The sun had hidden behind the snowy mountain range and threw its last rosy beams on a long thin cloud that stretched motionless across the clear horizon. The snow peaks began to disappear in purple mists, and only their top outline was visible, wonderfully distinct on the crimson sunset glow. The delicate moon, risen long since, began to grow pale against the deep azure. The green of the grass and trees was

turning black, and was becoming covered with dew.

The troops in dark masses moved with measured sounds along the luxuriant meadows. Tambourines, drums, and merry songs were heard here and there. The voice of the second tenor of the Sixth Company rang with full force, and the sounds of his clear chest-notes, full of feeling and power, floated away through the clear evening air.

THE WOOD-FELLING

A CADET'S STORY

LIST OF CHARACTERS IN *THE WOOD-FELLING*

DmíTRY, the Cadet's servant.
NICHOLAS PETRÓVICH, the narrator.
THEODOR MAKSÍMOV, a domineering gun-sergeant.
VELENCHÚK, a bustlingy submissive soldier.
CORPORAL PHILIP ANTÓNOV, soldierly and masterful.
MICHAEL DOROFÉICH, a sorgeant-major.
CHERNÓV.
ZHDÁNOV (Daddy), a meek old soldier.
CHÍKIN, a humorous artillery driver.
NICHOLAS FÉDOROVICH BÓLHOV, a Company Commander,
formerly in the Guards.
NIKOLÁYEV, his orderly.
MAJOR ABRÁM ILYÍCH KIRSÁNOV, a zealous but limited
officer.
CAPTAIN TROSÉNKO, who has served long in the Caucasus.
CAPTAIN KRAFT, a disagreeable Russian-German, boastful
and absurd.

THE WOOD-FELLING

A CADET'S STORY

CHAPTER I

IN the middle of the winter of 185-, a division of one battery was on service with the detachment operating in that part of the Terek Territory¹ called the Great Chechnya. On the evening of February 14, knowing that the platoon which I, in the absence of any officer, was commanding, was to join a column told off to fell wood next day, and having given and received the necessary orders, I retired to my tent earlier than usual. As I had not contracted the bad habit of warming my tent with hot charcoal, I lay down without undressing on my bed, which was supported on stakes driven into the ground, drew my fur cap over my eyes, tucked myself up in my sheepskin cloak, and fell into that peculiar, heavy, and deep sleep which comes at times of anxiety, and when one is awaiting danger. The expectation of the next day's affair had this effect on me.

At three next morning, while it was still quite dark, the warm sheepskin was pulled off me, and my eyes, heavy with sleep, were unpleasantly struck by the red light of a candle.

'Get up, please,' said a voice. I shut my eyes, unconsciously pulled the sheepskin back over myself, and again fell asleep. 'Get up, please,'

¹ The Terek Territory lies to the north-east of the Caucasian Mountains. The Great and Little Chechnya are districts in the southern part of it.

said Dmitry once more, remorselessly shaking me by the shoulder: 'the infantry are starting.' The reality suddenly flashed on my mind, I sat up, and jumped to my feet. After hurriedly drinking a glass of tea and washing myself with icy water, I crept out of the tent and went to the 'park' (the place where the cannons are). It was dark, misty, and cold. The dim red light of the night-fires, which, gleaming here and there in the camp, showed up the figures of the sleepy soldiers who lay near them, seemed but to make the darkness more intense.

Near by, quiet regular snoring could be heard, and from farther off, sounds of movements, voices, and the clatter of the muskets of the infantry preparing to start. There was a smell of smoke, manure, torches, and mist; the morning air caused cold shivers to run down one's back, and one's teeth chattered involuntarily.

It was only by the snorting and occasional stamping of the horses harnessed to them that we could tell where the limbers and ammunition wagons stood in the impenetrable darkness; and only the fiery dots of the linstocks showed where the guns were. 'God be with us!' With these words came the clanging sound of the first gun moving, then the noise of the ammunition wagon—and the platoon started. We all took off our caps and crossed ourselves. Having occupied the interval between the infantry companies, the platoon stopped and waited a quarter of an hour for the whole column to collect and for the commander to appear.

'One of our men is missing, Nicholas Petrovich.' With these words a black figure approached me,

whom I only knew by the voice to be the gun-sergeant of the platoon, Maksimov.

‘ Who is it ? ’

‘ Velenchuk is missing. He was there all the time they were harnessing—I saw him myself—but now he’s gone.’

As the column could not be expected to start at once, we decided to send Corporal Antonov to look for Velenchuk. Directly after that, several horsemen trotted past us in the dark. They were the commander and his suite ; and immediately the head of the column moved and started, and so at last did we also, but Antonov and Velenchuk were still absent. We had, however, hardly gone a hundred yards before they both overtook us.

‘ Where was he ? ’ I asked Antonov.

‘ Asleep in the “ park ”.’

‘ Why, has he had a drop too much ? ’

‘ Oh, no.’

‘ Then how is it he fell asleep ? ’

‘ I can’t make out.’

For about three hours we moved slowly on in silence and darkness, over some unploughed fields bare of snow, and over low bushes that crackled under the wheels of the gun-carriages. At last, after we had crossed a shallow but extremely rapid stream, we were stopped, and we heard the abrupt reports of *vintovkas*¹ in the direction of the vanguard.

These sounds, as usual, had a most exhilarating

¹ The *vintovka* was a long Asiatic rifle used by the Circassians (Cherkeses). When firing, they rested the barrel on a support formed by two thin spiked sticks tied at the top by a strap.

effect on every one. The detachment seemed to wake up: sounds of talking, movement, and laughter were heard in the ranks. Here a soldier wrestled with a comrade, there another hopped from foot to foot. Here was one chewing hard-tack, or, to while away the time, shouldering and grounding arms. Meanwhile the mist began to grow distinctly whiter in the east, the damp became more intense, and the surrounding objects gradually emerged from the gloom. I could already discern the green gun-carriages and ammunition wagons, the brass of the guns, covered with moisture by the mist, the familiar figures of my soldiers, every minute detail of which I had involuntarily studied, the bay horses, and the lines of infantry with their bright bayonets, their bags, their ramrods, and the kettles they carried on their backs.

We were soon again moved forward a few hundred yards where there was no road, and then we were shown our position. To the right one could see the steep bank of a winding stream and the high wooden posts of a Tartar cemetery; to the left and in front a black strip was visible through the mist. The platoon unlimbered. The Eighth Company, which covered us, piled their muskets, and a battalion with axes and muskets went to the forest.

Before five minutes were over fires were crackling and smoking in all directions. The soldiers dispersed, blew the fires and stirred them with hands and feet, dragged logs and branches; while the forest resounded with the unceasing noise of hundreds of axes and the crashing of falling trees.

The artillery, with a certain rivalry of the

infantry, heaped their pile high, and though it was already burning so that one could hardly come within two paces of it, and thick black smoke was rising through the frozen branches (from which drops fell sizzling into the flames) which the soldiers pressed down into the fire, and though the charcoal was glowing beneath and the grass was scorched all around, the soldiers were not satisfied, but kept throwing great logs on to the pile, feeding it with dry grass beneath, and heaping it higher and higher.

When I came up to the fire to smoke a cigarette, Velenchuk, always officious, but to-day feeling guilty and bustling about more than any one, in a fit of zeal snatched a piece of charcoal from the fire with his bare hand, and, after tossing it from hand to hand a couple of times, dropped it on the ground.

‘Light a twig and hold it up,’ said a soldier.

‘No, better get a linstock, lad,’ said another.

When I had at length lit my cigarette without the aid of Velenchuk, who was again trying to take a piece of charcoal in his hand, he rubbed his burnt fingers on the skirts of his sheepskin coat, and then, probably for want of something else to do, lifted a large piece of plane-tree wood and swung it into the fire. When at last he felt free to rest a bit, he came close up to the fire, threw open his cloak which he wore like a mantle fastened by one button, spread out his legs, held out his big, black hands, and drawing his mouth a bit to one side, screwed up his eyes.

‘Ah, I’ve gone and forgot my pipe. Here’s a go, lads !’ said he after a short silence, not addressing any one in particular.

CHAPTER II

IN Russia there are three predominant types of soldier, under which the men of all our forces—whether line, guards, infantry, cavalry, artillery, army of the Caucasus, or what not—may be classified.

These principal types, including many subdivisions and combinations, are:

1. The submissive ;
2. The domineering ;
3. The reckless.

The submissive are divided into, (a) the calmly submissive, and (b) the bustlingly submissive.

The domineering are divided into, (a) the sternly domineering, and (b) the diplomatically domineering.

The reckless are divided into, (a) the amusingly reckless, and (b) the viciously reckless.

The type most often met with—a type more lovable and attractive than the others, and generally accompanied by the best Christian virtues,—meekness, piety, patience, and devotion to the will of God,—is the submissive type in general. The distinctive feature of the calmly submissive is his invincible resignation to and contempt for all the reverses of fate which may befall him ; the distinctive features of the submissive drunkard are a mild, poetic disposition and sensibility ; the distinctive feature of the bustlingly submissive is limited mental capacity, combined with purposeless industry and zeal.

The domineering type in general is found chiefly among the higher grade of soldiers : the

corporals, sergeants, sergeant-majors, and so on. The first subdivision, the sternly domineering, is a noble, energetic, pre-eminently military type, and does not exclude high poetic impulses (Corporal Antonov, with whom I wish to acquaint the reader, belonged to this type). The second subdivision, formed by the diplomatic domineering, has for some time past been increasing largely. A man of this type is always eloquent and literate,¹ wears pink shirts, won't eat out of the common pot, sometimes smokes tobacco of Mousatov's brand, and thinks himself much superior to the common soldier, but is rarely himself as good a soldier as the domineering of the first subdivision.

The reckless type, like the domineering type, is good in its first subdivision, the amusingly reckless, whose characteristic traits are irresistible mirth, great capacity of all kinds, and a highly gifted and daring nature. As with the domineering class, the second subdivision is bad; the viciously reckless are terribly bad, but, to the honour of the Russian army it must be said that this type is very rare, and, when found, it is excluded from companionship by the public opinion of the soldiers themselves. Unbelief and a kind of boldness in vice are the chief traits characteristic of this class.

Velenchuk belonged to the bustling submissive. He was a Little-Russian by birth, had already served for fifteen years, and although not a showy or smart soldier, he was simple-minded, kindly, extremely though often inopportunely

¹ A distinction very frequently met with in Russian is between *literate* and *illiterate* people; i. e., between those who can and those who cannot read and write.

zealous, and also exceedingly honest. I say exceedingly honest, because an incident had occurred the year before which made this characteristic quality of his very evident. It must be remembered that almost every soldier knows a trade. The most usual trades are tailoring and bootmaking. Velenchuk taught himself the former, and judging from the fact that even Michael Dorofeich, the sergeant-major, ordered clothes from him, he must have attained some proficiency at his craft. Last year, in camp, Velenchuk undertook to make a fine cloth coat for Michael Dorofeich; but that very night, after he had cut out the coat and measured out the trimmings, and put them all under his pillow in the tent, a misfortune befell him: the cloth, that had cost *seven rubles*, disappeared during the night! Velenchuk, with tears in his eyes, trembling white lips and suppressed sobs, informed the sergeant-major of the occurrence. Michael Dorofeich was enraged. In the first moment of irritation he threatened the tailor; but afterwards, being a man with means and kindly, he just waved his hand and did not demand from Velenchuk payment of the value of the cloth. In spite of all the fuss made by the fussy Velenchuk, in spite of all the tears he shed when telling of his mishap, the thief was not found. A strong suspicion fell on the viciously reckless soldier Chernov, who slept in the same tent; but there were no positive proofs. The diplomatic domineering Michael Dorofeich, being a man with means, and having some little business transactions with the master-at-arms and the caterer of the mess (the aristocracy of the battery), very soon forgot all

about the loss of his mufti coat. Not so Velenchuk. He did not forget his misfortune. The soldiers said they feared, at the time, that he might commit suicide or run away into the mountains, so great was the effect of his mishap upon him. He neither ate nor drank, and could not even work, but was continually crying. When three days had passed he appeared, quite pale, before Michael Dorofeich, took with trembling fingers a gold coin from under his cuff and gave it him. 'Heaven's my witness, Michael Dorofeich, that it's all I have, and even that I borrowed from Zhdanov,' said he, sobbing again; 'and the other two rubles I swear I will also return as soon as I have earned them. He' (whom 'he' meant Velenchuk did not himself know) 'has made me appear like a rascal before you. He—with his loathsome, viper soul—he takes the last morsel from his brother soldier, and I having served for fifteen years. . . .' To the honour of Michael Dorofeich be it said, he did not take the remaining two rubles, though Velenchuk brought them to him two months later.

CHAPTER III

BESIDES Velenchuk, five other soldiers of my platoon sat warming themselves by our fire.

In the best place, on a butt, with his back to the wind, sat Maksimov, the gun-sergeant of the platoon, smoking a pipe. The habit of commanding and the consciousness of his dignity were betrayed by the pose, the look, and by every movement of this man, not to mention his nankeen-

covered sheepskin coat and the butt he was sitting on, which latter is an emblem of power at a halting-place.

When I came up he turned his head towards me without removing his eyes from the fire, and his look, following the direction his head had taken, only fell on me some time later. Maksimov was not a serf but a peasant-yeoman; he had some money, had qualified to take a class in the school-brigade, and had stuffed his head with erudition. He was awfully rich and awfully learned, so the soldiers said. I remember how once when we were practising plunging fire, with a quadrant, he explained to the soldiers gathered round, that a spirit level *is nothing but as it occurs that atmospheric mercury has its motion*. In reality, Maksimov was far from being stupid, and understood his work thoroughly; but he had the unfortunate peculiarity of sometimes purposely speaking so that there was no possibility of understanding him, and so that, I am convinced, he did not understand his own words. He was particularly fond of the words 'as it occurs' and 'continues', so that when I heard him say 'as it occurs' or 'continues', I knew beforehand that I should understand nothing of what followed. The soldiers, on the other hand, as far as I could judge, liked to hear his 'as it occurs', and suspected it of being fraught with deep meaning, though they did not understand a word of it any more than I did. This they attributed entirely to their own stupidity, and respected Theodor Maksimov all the more. In a word, Maksimov was one of the diplomatic domineering.

The soldier next to him, who had bared his sinewy red legs and was putting on his boots again by the fire, was Antonov,—that same Corporal Antonov, who in 1837, remaining with only two others in charge of an exposed gun, persisted in firing back at a powerful enemy, and, with two bullets in his leg, continued to serve his gun and to reload it.

The soldiers used to say that he would have been made a gun-sergeant long ago but for his character. And his character really was very peculiar. No one could have been calmer, gentler, or more accurate than he was when sober ; but when he had a fit of drinking he became quite another man ; he would not submit to authority, fought, brawled, and became a perfectly good-for-nothing soldier. Only the week before this, during the Carnival, he had had a drinking-bout ; and in spite of all threats, persuasions, and being tied to a cannon, he went on drinking and brawling up to the first day of Lent. During the whole of Lent, though the division had been ordered not to fast, he fed on dried bread, and during the first week would not even drink the regulation cup of vodka. But one had to see his sturdy thick-set figure, as of wrought iron, on its stumpy bandy legs, and his shiny moustached visage when, in a tipsy mood, he took the *balalayka* in his sinewy hands, and looking carelessly round played *Lady*, or walked down the street with his cloak thrown loosely over his shoulders, his medals dangling, his hands in the pockets of his nankeen blue trousers, and a look on his countenance of soldierly pride, and of contempt for all that was not of the artillery—one had to see all this in

order to understand how impossible it was for him, at such a moment, to abstain from fighting an orderly, a Cossack, an infantry-man, a peasant (in fact, any one not of the artillery) who was rude to him, or happened merely to be in his way. He fought and rioted not so much for his own pleasure as to maintain the spirit of soldiership in general, of which he felt himself to be the representative.

The third soldier, who sat on his heels smoking a clay pipe, was the artillery driver Chikin. He had an ear-ring in one of his ears, bristling little moustaches, and the physiognomy of a bird. 'Dear old Chikin,' as the soldiers called him, was a wit. During the bitterest frost, or up to his knees in mud, or after going two days without food, on the march, on parade, or at drill, the 'dear fellow' was always and everywhere making faces, twisting his legs about, or cracking jokes that convulsed the whole platoon with laughter. At every halting-place, and in the camp, there was always a circle of young soldiers collected round Chikin, who played *Filka*¹ with them, told them stories about the cunning soldier and the English *milord*, personated a Tartar or a German, or simply made remarks of his own at which every one roared with laughter. It is true that his reputation as a wit was so well established in the battery that it was sufficient for him to open his mouth and wink in order to produce a general guffaw, but really there was much in him that was truly humorous and surprising. He saw something special, something that never

¹ A soldier's card game.—L. T.

entered anybody else's head, in everything, and, above all, this capacity for seeing the funny side of things was proof against any and every trial.

The fourth soldier was an insignificant-looking boy recruited the year before, and this was his first campaign. He stood surrounded by the smoke, and so near the flames that his threadbare cloak seemed in danger of catching fire, yet, judging by the way he extended the skirts of his cloak and bent out his calves, and by his quiet, self-satisfied pose, he was feeling highly contented.

The fifth and last of the soldiers was Daddy Zhdanov. He sat a little way off, cutting a stick. Zhdanov had been serving in the battery longer than any one else, had known all the others as recruits, and they were all in the habit of calling him ' daddy '. It was said of him that he never drank, smoked, or played cards (not even ' noses '), and never used bad language. He spent all his spare time boot-making, went to church on holidays where that was possible, or else put a farthing taper before his icon and opened the book of psalms, the only book he could read. He seldom kept company with the other soldiers. To those who were his seniors in rank though his juniors in years, he was coldly respectful; with his equals he, not being a drinker, had few opportunities of mixing. He liked the recruits and the youngest soldiers best: he always took them under his protection, admonished them, and often helped them. Every one in the battery considered him a capitalist because he had some twenty-five rubles, out of which he was always

ready to lend something to a soldier in real need.

The same Maksimov who was now gun-sergeant, told me that ten years ago, when he first came as a recruit and drank all he had with the old soldiers who were in the habit of drinking, Zhdanov, noticing his unfortunate position, called him up, severely reprimanded him for his conduct and even beat him, delivered a lecture on how one should live in the army, and sent him away after giving him a shirt (which Maksimov lacked) and half-a-ruble in money. 'He made a man of me,' Maksimov always used to say with respect and gratitude. He also helped Velenchuk (whom he had taken under his protection since he was a recruit) at the time of his misfortune. When the coat was stolen, he helped him as he had helped many and many another during the twenty-five years of his service.

One could not hope to find a man in the service who knew his work more thoroughly, or was a better or more conscientious soldier than he; but he was too meek and insignificant-looking to be made a gun-sergeant, though he had been bombardier for fifteen years. Zhdanov's one enjoyment and passion was song. He had a few favourite songs, always collected a circle of singers from among the younger soldiers, and, though he could not sing himself, he would stand by them, his hands in the pockets of his cloak, his eyes closed, showing sympathy by the movements of his head and jaw. I don't know why, but that regular movement of the jaws below the ears, which I never noticed in any one else, seemed to me extremely expressive. His snow-white

head, his blackened moustaches, and his sun-burnt, wrinkled face, gave him at first sight a stern and harsh expression; but on looking closer into his large, round eyes, especially when they smiled (he never laughed with his lips), you were suddenly struck by something remarkable in their unusually mild, almost childlike look.

CHAPTER IV

‘I’LL be blowed! I’ve gone and forgot my pipe. Here’s a go, lads!’ repeated Velenchuk.

‘You should smoke *cikars*, old fellow!’ began Chikin, drawing his mouth to one side and winking. ‘There, now, I always smoke *cikars* when I’m at home—them’s sweeter.’

Of course everybody burst out laughing.

‘Forgot your pipe, indeed!’ interrupted Maksimov without heeding the general mirth, and beating the tobacco out of his pipe into the palm of his left hand with the proud air of a superior; ‘where did you vanish to—eh, Velenchuk?’

Velenchuk, half turning round to him, was about to raise his hand to his cap, but dropped it again.

‘Seems to me you hadn’t your sleep out after yesterday—falling asleep when you are once up! It’s not thanks the likes of you get for such goings on.’

‘May I die, Theodor Maksimov, if a drop has passed my lips; I don’t myself know what happened to me,’ answered Velenchuk. ‘Much cause I had for revelling,’ he muttered.

‘Just so; but we have to answer to the authori-

ties because of the likes of you, and you continue—it's quite scandalous!' the eloquent Maksimov concluded in a calmer tone.

'It's quite wonderful, lads,' Velenchuk went on after a moment's silence, scratching his head and addressing no one in particular; 'really quite wonderful, lads! Here have I been serving for the last sixteen years, and such a thing never happened to me. When we were ordered to appear for muster I was all right, but at the 'park', there it suddenly clutches hold of me, and clutches and clutches, and down it throws me, down on the ground and no more ado—and I did not myself know how I fell asleep, lads! That must have been the trances,' he concluded.

'True enough, I hardly managed to wake you,' said Antonov, as he pulled on his boot. 'I had to push and push, just as if you'd been a log!'

'Fancy now,' said Velenchuk, 'if I'd been drunk now! . . .'

'That's just like a woman we had at home,' began Chikin; 'she hardly got off the stove for two years. Once they began waking her—they thought she was asleep—and she was already dead. She used to be taken sleepy that way. That's what it is, old fellow!'

'Now then, Chikin, won't you tell us how you set the tone during your leave of absence?' said Maksimov, looking at me with a smile as if to say: 'Would you, too, like to hear the stupid fellow?'

'What tone, Theodor Maksimov?' said Chikin, giving me a rapid side-glance. 'In course I told them what sort of a *Caw-cusses* we'd got here.'

‘ Well, yes, how did you do it ? There ! don’t give yourself airs ; tell us how you *administrated* it to them.’

‘ How should I administrate it ? In course they asked me how we live,’ Chikin began rapidly, with the air of a man recounting something he had repeated several times before. “ “ We live well, old fellow,” says I. “ Provisions in plenty we get : morning and night a cup of *chokelad* for every *soldier lad*, and at noon barley broth before us is set, such as gentlefolks get, and instead of *vodka* we get a pint of *Modera* wine from *Devirier*, such as costs forty-four—with the bottle ten more ! ” ’

‘ Fine *Modera* ! ’ Velenchuk shouted louder than any one, rolling with laughter : ‘ that’s *Modera* of the right sort ! ’

‘ Well, and what did you tell them about the *Asiaites* ? ’ Maksimov went on to ask, when the general mirth had subsided a little.

Chikin stooped over the fire, poked out a bit of charcoal with a stick, put it to his pipe, and long continued puffing at his shag as though not noticing the silent curiosity awakened in his hearers. When he had at last drawn enough smoke he threw the bit of charcoal away, pushed his cap yet farther back, and, stretching himself, continued with a slight smile—

‘ Well, so they asked, “ What’s that *Cherkes* fellow or *Turk* as you’ve got down in your *Caucusses* ” , they say, “ as fights ? ” and so I says, “ Them’s not all of one sort ; there’s different *Cherkeses*, old fellow. There’s the *Wagabones*, them as lives in the stony mountains and eat stones instead of bread. They’re big,” says I, “ as big as a good-sized beam, they’ve one eye in

the forehead, and wear burning red caps," just such as yours, old fellow,' he added, turning to the young recruit, who really wore an absurd cap with a red crown.

At this unexpected sally the recruit suddenly collapsed, slapped his knees, and burst out laughing and coughing so that he hardly managed to utter in a stifled voice, 'Them Wagabones is the right sort !'

"Then", says I, "there's also the Mopingers," continued Chikin, making his cap slip on to his forehead with a movement of his head: "these others are little twins, so big . . . all in pairs," says I, "they run about hand in hand at such a rate," says I, "that you couldn't catch 'em on a horse!"—"Then how's it, lad," they say, "how's them Mopingers, be they born hand in hand ?" He said this in a hoarse bass, pretending to imitate a peasant. "Yes," says I, "he's naturally like that. Tear their hands apart, and they'll bleed just like a Chinaman: take a Chinaman's cap off, and it'll bleed."—"And tell us, lad, how do they fight ?"—"That's how," says I, "they catch you and rip your belly up and wind your bowels round your arm, and wind and wind. They go on winding and you go on laughing till your breath all goes."

'Well, and did they believe you, Chikin ?' said Maksimov with a slight smile, while all the rest were dying with laughter.

'Such queer people, Theodor Maksimov, they believe everything. On my word they do. But when I told them about Mount Kazpec, and said that the snow didn't melt on it all the summer, they mocked at me ! "What are you bragging for,

lad," they says ; " a big mountain and the snow on it don't melt ? Why, lad, when the thaw sets in here, every tiny bit of a hillock thaws first, while the snow still lies in the hollows." There now ! ' Chikin concluded with a wink.

CHAPTER V

THE bright disk of the sun, shining through the milky-white mist, had already risen to a considerable height. The purple-grey horizon gradually widened, but though it had receded considerably, it was still as sharply outlined by a deceptive white wall of mist.

Beyond the felled wood a good-sized plain now opened in front of us. The black or milky-white or purple smoke of the fires expanded, and fantastic shapes of white mist-clouds floated above the plain. An occasional group of mounted Tartars appeared far in the distance before us, and at rare intervals the reports of our rifles¹ and of their *vintovkas* and cannon were to be heard.

This, as Captain Hlopov said, was 'not yet business, but only play.'

The commander of the 9th Company of Chasseurs, that formed our support, came up to our guns, pointed to three Tartars² on horseback skirting the forest some 1,400 yards from us,

¹ Most of the Russian army at that time were armed with smooth-bore muskets, but a few had wide-calibred muzzle-loading rifles (*stutzers*), which were difficult to handle and slow to load. *Vintovkas* were also rifles.

² Russians in the Caucasus use the word 'Tartar' loosely for any of the native Mohammedan tribes (Cir-

and, with the fondness for artillery fire common among infantry officers in general, asked me to let off a ball or bomb at them.

'Do you see?' he said with a kind and persuasive smile, as he stretched his hand from behind my shoulder, 'in front of those big trees there . . . one on a white horse and in a black Circassian cloak, and two others behind. Do you see? Could you not, please?'

'And there are three more riding at the outskirt of the forest,' said Antonov, who had astonishingly sharp eyesight, coming up to us, and hiding behind his back the pipe he had been smoking. 'There, the one in front has taken his gun out of its case. They can be seen distinctly, y'r honor!'

'Look there! he 's fired, lads. D'ye see the white smoke?' said Velenchuk, who was one of a group of soldiers standing a little behind us.

'At our line surely, the blackguard!' remarked another.

'See what a lot of 'em come streaming out of the forest. Must be looking round . . . want to place a gun,' said a third.

'Supposing now a bomb was sent right into that lot, wouldn't they spit!'

'And what d'ye think, old fellow--that it would just reach 'em?' said Chikin.

'Twelve hundred or twelve hundred and fifty yards: not more than that,' said Maksimov calmly and as if speaking to himself, though it was evident he was just as anxious to fire as the rest: 'if we were to give an elevation of forty-five cassians, Kabardans, &c.), much as among ourselves the word 'Niggers' is used to denote almost any dark race.

lines to our "unicorn"¹ we could hit the very point, that is to say, perfectly.'

'D'ye know, if you were now to aim at that group, you would be sure to hit somebody. There now, they are all together—please be quick and give the order to fire,' the company commander continued to entreat me.

'Are we to point the gun?' suddenly asked Antonov in an abrupt bass, with a look as if of gloomy anger.

I must admit that I also felt a strong wish to fire, so I ordered the second gun to be trained.

I had hardly given the order before the shell was charged and rammed in, and Antonov, leaning against the cheek of the gun-carriage and holding two of his thick fingers to the base-ring, was directing the movement of the tail of the gun. 'Right, left—a bit to the left, a wee bit—more—more—right!' he said, stepping from the gun with a look of pride.

The infantry officer, I, and Maksimov, one after the other, approached, put our heads to the sights, and expressed our various opinions.

'By Heavens, it will shoot over,' remarked Velenchuk, clicking his tongue, though he was only looking over Antonov's shoulder, and therefore had no grounds for this supposition. 'By Hea—vens, it will shoot over; it will hit that there tree, my lads!'

I gave the order: 'Two.'

The men stepped away from the gun. Antonov ran aside to watch the flight of the shot. The touch-hole flashed and the brass rang. At the

¹ The 'unicorn' was a type of gun, narrowing towards the muzzle, used in the Russian artillery at that time.

same moment we were enveloped in a cloud of powder-smoke, and, emerging from the overpowering boom of the discharge, the humming, metallic sound of the flying shot receded with the swiftness of lightning and died away in the distance amid general silence.

A little beyond the group of horsemen a white cloudlet appeared ; the Tartars galloped away in all directions, and the report of the explosion reached us. ‘ That was very fine ! ’ ‘ Ah, how they galloped ! ’ ‘ The devils don’t like that ! ’ came the words of approval and ridicule from the ranks of the artillery and infantry.

‘ If we had had the gun pointed only a touch lower we should just have caught him. I said it would hit the tree, and sure enough it did go to the right,’ remarked Velenchuk.

CHAPTER VI

LEAVING the soldiers to discuss how the Tartars galloped off when they saw the shell, why they had been riding there, and whether there were many of them in the forest, I went and sat down with the company commander under a tree a few steps off, to wait while the cutlets he had invited me to share were being warmed up. The company commander, Bolhov, was one of the officers nicknamed ‘ Bonjourists ’ in the regiment. He was a man of some means, had formerly served in the Guards, and spoke French. But in spite of all this his comrades liked him. He was clever enough, and had tact enough, to wear a coat of Petersburg make, to eat a good dinner, and to

speak French, without too much offending his fellow officers. After talking about the weather, the military operations, our mutual acquaintances among the officers, and having assured ourselves of the satisfactory state of each other's ideas by questions and answers, and the views expressed, we involuntarily passed to more intimate conversation. And when people belonging to the same circle meet in the Caucasus, a very evident, even if unspoken, question arises: 'Why are you here?' and it was to this silent question of mine that, as it seemed to me, my companion wished to reply.

'When will this expedition end?' he said lazily 'It is so dull.'

'I don't think it dull,' said I. 'It's much worse on the staff.'

'Oh, it's ten thousand times worse on the staff,' he said irascibly. 'No, I mean when will the whole thing end?'

'What is it you want to end?' asked I.

'Everything,—the whole affair! . . . Are the cutlets ready, Nikolayev?'

'Then why did you come to serve here if you so dislike the Caucasus?' I said.

'Do you know why?' he answered with resolute frankness. 'In obedience to tradition! You know there exists in Russia a most curious tradition about the Caucasus, making it out to be a "promised land" for all unfortunates.'

'Yes, that is almost true,' said I. 'Most of us—'

'But the best of it is,' he said, interrupting me, 'that all of us who came to the Caucasus in obedience to the tradition made a terrible mistake

in our calculations, and I can't for the life of me see why one should, in consequence of an unfortunate love affair or of financial troubles, choose to go and serve in the Caucasus rather than in Kazan or Kaluga. Why, in Russia they imagine the Caucasus to be something majestic : eternal virgin ice, rushing torrents, daggers, mantles, fair Circassians, and an atmosphere of terror and romance ; but in reality there is nothing amusing in it. If they only realized that we never get to the virgin-ice, that it would not be at all amusing if we did, and that the Caucasus is divided into governments—Stavropol, Tiflis, and so on.'

'Yes,' said I, laughing, 'we look very differently at the Caucasus when we are in Russia and when we are here. It is like what you may have experienced when reading verses in a language you are not familiar with ; you imagine them to be much better than they are.'

'I really don't know ; but I dislike this Caucasus awfully,' he said, interrupting me.

'Well, no ; I still like the Caucasus, only in a different way.'

'Perhaps it is all right,' he continued irritably ; 'all I know is that I'm not all right in the Caucasus.'

'Why is that ?' I asked, to say something.

'Well, first because it has deceived me. All that I, in obedience to tradition, came to the Caucasus to be cured of, has followed me here, only with the difference that there it was all on a big scale, and now it is on a little dirty one, where at each step I find millions of petty anxieties, shabbinesses, and insults ; and next, because I feel that I am sinking, morally, lower

and lower every day ; but chiefly, because I do not feel fit for the service here. I can't stand running risks. The fact of the matter is simply that I am not brave.'

He stopped and looked at me, not joking.

Though this unasked-for confession surprised me very much, I did not contradict him, as he evidently wished me to do, but waited for his own refutation of his words, which always follows in such cases.

' Do you know, in coming on this expedition I am taking part in an action for the first time,' he continued, ' and you can't think what was going on in me yesterday. When the Sergeant-major brought the order that my company was to join the column, I turned as white as a sheet and could not speak for excitement. And if you only knew what a night I had ! If it were true that one's hair turns white from fear, mine ought to be perfectly white to-day, because I don't think any one condemned to death ever suffered more in a night than I did ; and even now, though I feel a bit easier than in the night, this is what goes on inside ! ' he added, turning his fist about before his chest. ' And what is funny is that while a most fearful tragedy is being enacted, here one sits eating cutlets and onions and making believe that it is great fun.—Have we any wine, Nikolayev ? ' he added, yawning.

' That's *him*, my lads ! ' came the excited voice of one of the soldiers, and all eyes turned towards the border of the distant forest.

In the distance a puff of bluish smoke expanded and rose, blown about by the wind. When I had understood that this was a shot fired at us by

the enemy, all before my eyes at the moment assumed a sort of new and majestic character. The piles of arms, the smoke of the fires, the blue sky, the green gun-carriages, Nikolayev's sun-burnt, moustached face—all seemed telling me that the ball that had already emerged from the smoke and was at that moment flying through space, might be directed straight at my breast.

‘Where did you get the wine?’ I asked Bolhov lazily, while deep in my soul two voices spoke with equal clearness. One said, ‘Lord receive my soul in peace,’ the other, ‘I hope I shall not stoop, but smile, while the ball is passing,’ and at that moment something terribly unpleasant whistled past our heads, and a cannon ball crashed down a couple of paces from us.

‘There now, had I been a Napoleon or a Frederick, I should certainly have paid you a compliment,’ Bolhov remarked, turning towards me quite calmly.

‘You have done so as it is,’ I answered, with difficulty hiding the excitement produced in me by the danger just passed.

‘Well, what if I have?—no one will write it down.’

‘Yes, I will.’

‘Well, if you do put it down, it will only be “for critikism”, as Mischenkov says,’ he added with a smile.

‘Ugh! the damned thing!’ just then remarked Antonov behind us, as he spat over his shoulder with vexation, ‘just missed my legs!’

All my attempts to seem calm, and all our cunning phrases, suddenly seemed to me insufferably silly after that simple exclamation.

CHAPTER VII

THE enemy had really placed two guns where we had seen the Tartars riding, and they fired a shot every twenty or thirty minutes at our men who were felling the wood. My platoon was ordered forward to the plain to answer the enemy's fire. A puff of smoke appeared on the outskirts of the forest, then followed a report and a whistle, and a ball fell in front or behind us. The enemy's shots fell fortunately for us, and we sustained no losses.

The artillerymen behaved splendidly, as they always do ; loaded quickly, pointed carefully at the spots where the puffs of smoke were, and quietly joked with one another.

The infantry supports lay near in silent inaction awaiting their turn. The wood-fellers went on with their work, the axes rang faster and more uninterruptedly through the forest ; but when the whistle of a shot became audible all were suddenly silent, and, in the midst of the deathly stillness, voices not quite calm exclaimed, 'Scatter, lads !' and all eyes followed the ball ricochetting over wood piles and strewn branches.

The mist had now risen quite high and, turning into clouds, gradually disappeared into the dark-blue depths of the sky ; the unveiled sun shone brightly, throwing sparkling reflections from the steel bayonets, the brass of the guns, the thawing earth, and the glittering hoar-frost. In the air one felt the freshness of the morning frost together with the warmth of the spring sunshine ; thousands of different hues and tints mingled in the dry

leaves of the forest, and the shining, beaten track plainly showed the traces left by wheels and the marks of rough-shod horses' feet.

The movement became greater and more noticeable between the two forces. On all sides the blue smoke of the guns appeared more and more frequently. Dragoons rode forward, the streamers of their lances flying ; from the infantry companies one heard songs, and the carts laden with firewood formed into a train in our rear. The general rode up to our platoon and ordered us to prepare to retire. The enemy settled in the bushes on our left flank, and their snipers began to molest us seriously. A bullet came humming from the woods to the left and struck a gun-carriage, then came another, and a third. . . . The infantry supports that had been lying near us rose noisily, took up their muskets and formed into line.

The small-arm firing increased, and bullets flew more and more frequently. The retreat commenced, and consequently the serious part of the action, as is usual in the Caucasus.

Everything showed that the artillermen liked the bullets as little as the infantry had liked the cannon-balls. Antonov frowned, Chikin imitated the bullets and joked about them, but it was easy to see he did not like them. 'It's in a mighty hurry,' he said of one of them ; another he called 'little bee' ; a third, which seemed to fly slowly past overhead with a kind of piteous wail, he called an 'orphan', which caused general laughter.

The recruit, who, unaccustomed to such scenes, bent his head to one side and stretched his neck

every time a bullet passed, also made the soldiers laugh. 'What, is that a friend of yours you're bowing to?' they said to him. Velenchuk also, usually quite indifferent to danger, was now excited: he was evidently vexed that we did not fire case-shot in the direction whence the bullets came. He repeated several times in a discontented tone, 'Why is *he* allowed to go for us and gets nothing in return? If we turned a gun that way and gave them a taste of case-shot they'd hold their noise, no fear!'

It was true that it was time to do this, so I ordered to fire a last bomb and then to load with case-shot.

'Case-shot!' Antonov called out briskly as he went through the thick of the smoke to sponge out the gun as soon as it was discharged.

At that moment I heard, just behind me, the rapid whiz of a bullet suddenly stopped with a dull thud by something. My heart stopped beating. 'Some one of the men has been hit,' I thought, while a sad presentiment made me afraid to turn round. And, really, that sound was followed by the heavy fall of a body, and the heart-rending 'Oh-o-oh' of some one who had been wounded. 'I'm hit, lads!' a voice I knew exclaimed with an effort. It was Velenchuk. He was lying on his back between the limbers and a cannon. The cartridge-bag he had been carrying was thrown to one side. His forehead was covered with blood, and a thick red stream was running down over his right eye and nose. He was wounded in the stomach but hardly bled at all there; his forehead he had hurt against a log in falling.

All this I made out much later; the first moment I could only see an indistinct mass, and, as it seemed to me, a tremendous quantity of blood.

Not one of the soldiers who were loading said a word, only the young recruit muttered something that sounded like 'Dear me! he's bleeding', and Antonov, frowning, gave an angry grunt; but it was clear that the thought of death passed through the soul of each. All set to work very actively and the gun was loaded in a moment, but the ammunition-bearer bringing the case-shot went two or three steps round the spot where Velenchuk still lay groaning.

CHAPTER VIII

EVERY one who has been in action undoubtedly knows that strange and though illogical yet powerful feeling of aversion for the spot where some one has been killed or wounded. It was evident that for a moment my men gave way to this feeling when Velenchuk had to be taken to the cart that came up to fetch him. Zhdanov came up angrily to the wounded man, and, taking him under the arms, lifted him without heeding his loud screams. 'Now then, what are you standing there for? take hold!' he shouted, and about ten assistants, some of them superfluous, immediately surrounded Velenchuk. But hardly had they moved him when he began screaming and struggling terribly.

'What are you screaming like a hare for?'

said Antonov roughly, holding his leg ; 'mind, or we'll just leave you.'

And the wounded man really became quiet, and only now and then uttered, 'Oh, it's my death ! Oh, oh, oh, lads !'

When he was laid in the cart he even stopped moaning, and I heard him speak to his comrades in low clear tones, probably saying farewell to them.

No one likes to look at a wounded man during an action, and, instinctively hurrying to end this scene, I ordered him to be taken quickly to the ambulance, and returned to the guns. But after a few minutes I was told that Velenchuk was asking for me, and I went up to the cart.

The wounded man lay at the bottom of the cart holding on to the sides with both hands. His broad healthy face had completely changed during those few moments ; he seemed to have grown thinner and years older, his lips were thin and pale, and pressed together with an evident strain. The hasty and dull expression of his glance was replaced by a kind of bright clear radiance, and on the bloody forehead and nose already lay the impress of death. Though the least movement caused him excruciating pain, he nevertheless asked to have a small *cherez*¹ with money taken from his left leg.

The sight of his bare, white, healthy leg, when his jack-boot had been taken off and the purse untied, produced on me a terribly sad feeling.

'Here are three rubles and a half,' he said, as I took the purse : 'you'll take care of them.'

¹ The *cherez* is a purse in the form of a garter, usually worn by soldiers below the knee.—L. T.

The cart was starting, but he stopped it.

‘ I was making a cloak for Lieutenant Sulinovsky. He gave me two rubles. I bought buttons for one and a half, and half a ruble is in my bag with the buttons. Please let him have it.’

‘ All right ! all right ! ’ said I. ‘ Get well again, old fellow.’

He did not answer ; the cart started, and he again began to groan and cry out in a terrible, heart-rending voice. It was as if, having done with the business of this life, he did not think it necessary to restrain himself, and considered it permissible to allow himself this relief.

CHAPTER IX

‘ WHERE are you off to ? Come back ! Where are you going ? ’ I shouted to the recruit, who, with his reserve linstock under his arm and a stick of some sort in his hand, was, in the coolest manner, following the cart that bore the wounded man.

But the recruit only looked at me lazily, muttered something or other, and continued his way, so that I had to send a soldier to bring him back. He took off his red cap and looked at me with a stupid smile.

‘ Where were you going ? ’ I asked.

‘ To the camp.’

‘ Why ? ’

‘ Why ? . . . Velenchuk is wounded,’ he said, again smiling.

‘ What’s that to you ? You must stay here.’

He looked at me with surprise, then turned quietly round, put on his cap, and went back to his place.

The affair in general was successful. The Cossacks, as we heard, had made a fine charge and brought back three dead Tartars;¹ the infantry had provided itself with firewood, and had only half a dozen men wounded; the artillery had lost only Velenchuk and two horses. For that, two miles of forest had been cut down, and the place so cleared as to be unrecognizable. Instead of the thick outskirts of the forest you saw before you a large plain covered with smoking fires, and cavalry and infantry marching back to camp.

Though the enemy continued to pursue us with artillery and small-arm fire up to the cemetery by the little river we had crossed in the morning, the retirement was successfully accomplished. I was already beginning to dream of the cabbage-soup and mutton ribs with buckwheat that were awaiting me in the camp, when a message came from the General ordering a redoubt to be constructed by the river, and the 3rd battalion of the K—— Regiment and the platoon of the 4th Battery to remain there till next day.

The carts with the wood and the wounded, the Cossacks, the artillery, the infantry with muskets and faggots on their shoulders, all passed us with

¹ The 'Tartars', being Mohammedans, make a point of not letting the bodies of their slain fall into the hands of the 'unbelievers', but removed them and buried them as heroes. The capture of three bodies therefore indicates the vigour of the attack and the demoralization of the enemy.

noise and songs. Every face expressed animation and pleasure, caused by the escape from danger and the hope of rest. Only we and the 3rd battalion had to postpone these pleasant feelings till to-morrow.

CHAPTER X

WHILE we of the artillery were busy with the guns—parking the limbers and the ammunition wagons, and arranging the picket-ropes—the infantry had already piled their muskets, made up camp-fires, built little huts of branches and maize straw, and begun boiling their buckwheat.

The twilight had set in. Bluish white clouds crept over the sky. The mist, turning into fine dank drizzle, wetted the earth and the soldiers' cloaks; the horizon narrowed, and all the surroundings assumed a gloomier hue. The damp I felt through my boots and on my neck, the ceaseless movement and talk in which I took no part, the sticky mud on which my feet kept slipping, and my empty stomach, all combined to put me into the dreariest, most unpleasant frame of mind after the physical and moral weariness of the day. I could not get Velenchuk out of my head. The whole simple story of his soldier-life depicted itself persistently in my imagination.

His last moments were as clear and calm as his whole life had been. He had lived too honestly and been too artless for his simple faith in a future heavenly life to be shaken at the decisive moment.

‘Your honour!’ said Nikolayev, coming up to

me, 'the Captain asks you to come and have tea with him.'

Having scrambled through, as best I could, between the piles of arms and the camp-fires, I followed Nikolayev to where Bolhov was, thinking with pleasure of a tumbler of hot tea, and a cheerful conversation which would disperse my gloomy thoughts.

'Have you found him?' I heard Bolhov's voice say from inside a maize-hut in which a light was burning.

'I've brought him, y'r honour,' answered Nikolayev's bass voice.

Inside the hut Bolhov was sitting on a dry mantle, with unbuttoned coat and no cap. A samovar stood boiling by his side, and on a drum were light refreshments. A bayonet holding a candle was stuck into the ground.

'What do you think of it?' he asked, looking proudly round his cosy establishment. It really was so nice inside the hut that at tea I quite forgot the damp, the darkness, and Velenchuk's wound. We talked of Moscow, and of things that had not the least relation to the war or to the Caucasus.

After a moment of silence, such as sometimes occurs in the most animated conversation, Bolhov looked at me with a smile.

'I think our conversation this morning struck you as being very strange,' he said.

'No, why do you think so? It only seemed to me that you were too frank; there are things which we all know, but which should never be mentioned.'

'Why not? If there were the least possibility of changing this life for the lowest and poorest

without danger and without service, I should not hesitate a moment.'

'Then why don't you return to Russia?' I asked.

'Why?' he repeated. 'Oh, I have thought about that long ago. I can't return to Russia now until I have the Ann and Vladimir orders: an Ann round my neck, and the rank of major, as I planned when I came here.'

'Why?—if, as you say, you feel unfit for the service here.'

'But what if I feel still more unfit to go back to Russia to the same position that I left? That is also one of the traditions in Russia, confirmed by Passek, Sleptsov, and others, that one need only go to the Caucasus to be laden with rewards. Every one expects and demands it of us; and I have been here for two years, have been on two expeditions, and have got nothing. But still I have so much ambition that I won't leave on any account until I am a major with a Vladimir and Ann round my neck. I have become so concerned about it that it upsets me when Gnilokishkin gets a reward and I don't. And then, how am I to show myself in Russia, to the village elder—the merchant Kotelnikov—to whom I sell my corn; to my Moscow aunt; and to all those good people, if after two years spent in the Caucasus I return without any reward? It is true I don't at all wish to know all those people, and they, too, no doubt, care very little about me; but man is so made that, though I don't want to know them, yet on account of them I'm wasting the best years of my life, all my life's happiness, and am ruining my future.'

CHAPTER XI

JUST then we heard the voice of the commander of the battalion outside, addressing Bolhov.

‘Who is with you, Nicholas Fedorovich?’

Bolhov gave him my name, and then three officers scrambled into the hut—Major Kirsanov; the adjutant of his battalion; and Captain Trosenko.

Kirsanov was not tall but stout, he had black moustaches, rosy cheeks, and oily little eyes. These eyes were his most remarkable feature. When he laughed, nothing remained of them but two tiny moist stars, and these little stars, together with his wide-stretched lips and out-stretched neck, often gave him an extraordinarily senseless look. In the regiment Kirsanov behaved himself and bore himself better than any one else; his subordinates did not complain of him, and his superiors respected him—though the general opinion was that he was very limited. He knew the service, was exact and zealous, always had ready money, kept a carriage and a man-cook, and knew how to make an admirable pretence of being proud.

‘What were you talking about, Nicholas Fedorovich?’

‘Why, about the attractions of the service here.’

But just then Kirsanov noticed me, a cadet, and to impress me with his importance he paid no attention to Bolhov’s reply, but looked at the drum and said—

‘Are you tired, Nicholas Fedorovich?’

‘No, you see we——’ Bolhov began.

But again the dignity of the commander of the battalion seemed to make it necessary to interrupt, and to ask another question.

‘That was a famous affair to-day, was it not?’

The adjutant of the battalion was a young ensign recently promoted from being a cadet, a modest, quiet lad with a bashful and kindly-pleasant face. I had met him at Bolhov’s before. The lad would often come to Bolhov’s, bow, sit down in a corner, and remain silent for hours making cigarettes and smoking them; then he would rise, bow, and go away. He was the type of a poor Russian nobleman’s son, who had chosen the military career as the only one possible to him with his education, and who esteemed his position as an officer above everything else in the world—a simple-minded and lovable type, notwithstanding the comical appurtenances inseparable from it: the tobacco-pouch, dressing-gown, guitar, and little moustache-brush we are accustomed to associate with it. It was told of him in the regiment, that he bragged about being just but strict with his orderly, and that he used to say, ‘I punish seldom, but when I am compelled to do it, it’s no joke,’ and that when his tipsy orderly robbed him outrageously and even began to insult him, he, the master, took him to the guard-house and ordered everything to be prepared for a flogging, but was so upset at the sight of the preparations that he could only say, ‘There now, you see, I could——’ and, becoming quite disconcerted, ran home in great confusion, and was henceforth afraid to look his man Chernov in the eyes. His comrades gave the simple-minded boy no rest, but teased him continually

about this episode, and more than once I heard how he defended himself, and, blushing to the tips of his ears, assured them that it was not true, but just the contrary.

The third visitor, Captain Trosenko, was a thoroughgoing old Caucasian—that is, a man for whom the company he commanded had become his family ; the fortress where the staff was, his home ; and the soldiers' singing his only pleasure in life. He was a man for whom everything unconnected with the Caucasus was contemptible and scarcely worthy of being considered probable, and everything connected with the Caucasus was divided into two halves : ours and not ours. The first he loved, the second he hated with all the power of his soul ; but above all he was a man of steeled, calm courage, wonderfully kind in his behaviour to his comrades and subordinates, and desperately frank and even rude, to aides-de-camp and ' Bonjourists ', for whom, for some reason, he had a great dislike. On entering the hut he nearly caved the roof in with his head, then suddenly sank down and sat on the ground.

' Well ? ' he said, and then suddenly remarking me, whom he did not know, he stopped and gazed at me with a dull, fixed look.

' Well, and what have you been conversing about ? ' asked the Major, taking out his watch and looking at it, though I am perfectly certain he had no need to.

' Why, I've been asked my reasons for serving here—'

' Of course, Nicholas Fedorovich wishes to distinguish himself here, and then to return home,' said the Major.

‘ Well, and you, Abram Ilyich,’ said Bolhov, addressing Kirsanov, ‘ tell me why you are serving in the Caucasus.’

‘ I serve because, in the first place, as you know, it is every one’s duty to serve. . . . What ? ’ he then added, though no one had spoken. ‘ I had a letter from Russia yesterday, Nicholas Fedorovich,’ he continued, evidently wishing to change the subject ; ‘ they write that . . . they ask such strange questions.’

‘ What questions ? ’ asked Bolhov.

The Major began laughing.

‘ Very queer questions. . . . They ask, can jealousy exist where there is no love. . . . What ? ’ he asked, turning round and glancing at us all.

‘ Dear me ! ’ said Bolhov, with a smile.

‘ Yes, you know, it is nice in Russia,’ continued the Major, just as if his sentences flowed naturally from one another. ‘ When I was in Tambov in ’52, they received me everywhere as if I had been some emperor’s aide-de-camp. Will you believe it, that at a ball at the Governor’s, when I came in, you know . . . well, they received me very well. The General’s wife herself, you know, talked to me, and asked me about the Caucasus, and everybody was . . . so that I hardly knew. . . . They examined my gold sabre as if it were some curiosity ; they asked for what I had received the sabre, for what the Ann, for what the Vladimir . . . so I just told them. . . . What ? That’s what the Caucasus is good for, Nicholas Fedorovich ! ’ he continued, without waiting for any reply :—‘ There they think very well of us Caucasians. You know a young man that’s a staff-officer and has an Ann and a Vladimir

... that counts for a good deal in Russia. . . . What ?'

'And you, no doubt, piled it on a bit, Abram Ilyich ?' said Bolhov.

'He—he !' laughed the Major, stupidly. 'You know one has to do that. And didn't I feed well those two months !'

'And tell me, is it nice there in Russia ?' said Trosenko, inquiring about Russia as though it were China or Japan.

'Yes, and the champagne we drank those two months, it was awful !'

'Eh, nonsense ! You'll have drunk nothing but lemonade. There now, I'd have burst to let them see how Caucasians drink. I'd have given them something to talk about. I'd have shown them how one drinks ; eh, Bolhov ?' said Trosenko.

'But you, Daddy, have been more than ten years in the Caucasus,' said Bolhov, 'and you remember what Ermolov¹ said ? . . . And Abram Ilyich has been only six.'

'Ten indeed ! . . . nearly sixteen. . . . Well, Bolhov, let us have some sage-vodka. It's damp, b-r-r-r ! . . . Eh ?' said Trosenko, smiling, 'Will you have a drink, Major ?'

But the Major had been displeased by the old Captain's first remarks to him, and plainly drew back and sought refuge in his own grandeur. He hummed something, and again looked at his watch.

¹ General A. P. Ermolov (1772–1861), who was renowned for his firmness and justness as a ruler in the Caucasus, and who subdued Chechnya and Daghestan, used to say that after ten years in the Caucasus an officer 'either takes to drink or marries a loose woman'.

‘ For my part, I shall never go there ! ’ Trosenko continued without heeding the Major’s frowns. ‘ I have lost the habit of speaking and walking in the Russian way. They’d ask, “ What curious creature is this coming here ? Asia, that’s what it is.” Am I right, Nicholas Fedorovich ? Besides, what have I to go to Russia for ? What does it matter ? I shall be shot here some day. They’ll ask, “ Where’s Trosenko ? ” “ Shot ! ” What will you do with the 8th Company then, eh ? ’ he added, always addressing the Major.

‘ Send the officer on duty ! ’ shouted the Major, without answering the Captain, though I again felt sure there was no need for him to give any orders.

‘ And you, young man, are glad, I suppose, to be drawing double pay ? ’¹ said the Major, turning to the Adjutant of the battalion after some moments of silence.

‘ Yes, sir, very glad of course.’

‘ I think our pay now very high, Nicholas Fedorovich,’ continued the Major ; ‘ a young man can live very decently, and even permit himself some small luxuries.’

‘ No, really, Abram Ilyich,’ said the Adjutant bashfully. ‘ Though it’s double it’s barely enough. You see, one must have a horse.’

‘ What are you telling me, young man ? I have been an ensign myself and know. Believe me, one can live very well with care. But there ! count it up,’ added he, bending the little finger of his left hand.

¹ An officer’s allowance in Russia proper is very small, but when on service in Poland, the Caucasus, Siberia, &c., they receive a higher rate of pay.

‘ We always draw our salaries in advance; isn’t that account enough for you ? ’ said Trosenko, emptying a glass of vodka.

‘ Well, yes, but what do you expect. . . . What ? ’

Just then a white head with a flat nose thrust itself into the opening of the hut, and a sharp voice said with a German accent—

‘ Are you here, Abram Ilyich ? The officer on duty is looking for you.’

‘ Come in, Kraft ! ’ said Bolhov.

A long figure in the uniform of the general staff crept in at the door, and began shaking hands all round with peculiar fervour.

‘ Ah, dear Captain, are you here too ? ’ said he, turning to Trosenko.

In spite of the darkness the new visitor made his way to the Captain, and to the latter’s extreme surprise and dismay, as it seemed to me, kissed him on the lips.

‘ This is a German trying to be hail fellow well met,’ thought I.

CHAPTER XII

My surmise was at once confirmed. Captain Kraft asked for vodka, calling it a ‘ warmer’, croaked horribly, and, throwing back his head, emptied the glass.

‘ Well, gentlemen, we have scoured the plains of Chechnya to-day, have we not ? ’ he began, but, seeing the officer on duty, stopped at once to allow the Major to give his orders.

‘ Have you been round the lines ? ’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Have the ambuscades been placed ?’

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Then give the company commanders orders to be as cautious as possible.’

‘Yes, sir.’

The Major screwed up his eyes in profound contemplation.

‘Yes, and tell the men they may now boil their buckwheat.’

‘They are already boiling it, sir.’

‘All right ! you may go, sir.’

‘Well, we were just reckoning up how much an officer needs,’ continued the Major, turning to us with a condescending smile. ‘Let us count. You want a uniform and a pair of trousers, don’t you ?’

‘Certainly.’

‘That, let us say, is 50 rubles for two years ; therefore 25 rubles a year for clothes. Then for food, 40 kopeks a day—is that right ?’

‘Oh yes, that is even too much.’

‘Well, never mind, I’ll leave it so. Then for a horse and repair of harness and saddle—30 rubles. And that is all. So it’s 25, and 120, and 30—that’s 175 rubles. So you have for luxuries—tea, sugar, tobacco—a matter of 20 rubles left. So you see . . . Isn’t it so, Nicholas Fedorovich ?’

‘No, but excuse me, Abram Ilyich,’ said the Adjutant timidly, ‘nothing remains for tea and sugar. You allow one suit in two years ; but it’s hardly possible to keep oneself in trousers with all this marching. And boots ? I wear out a pair almost every month. Then underclothing—

shirts, towels, leg-bands,¹—it all has to be bought. When one comes to reckon it all up nothing remains over. That's really so, Abram Ilyich.'

'Ah, it's splendid to wear leg-bands,' Kraft suddenly remarked after a moment's silence, uttering the word 'leg-bands' in specially tender tones. 'It's so simple, you know; quite Russian!'

'I'll tell you something,' Trosenko remarked. 'Reckon what way you like and you'll find we might as well put our teeth away on a shelf, and yet here we are all alive, drinking tea, smoking tobacco, and drinking vodka. When you've served as long as I have,' he went on, turning to the ensign, 'you'll have also learned how to live. Why, gentlemen, do you know how he treats the orderlies?'

And Trosenko, dying with laughter, told us the whole story about the ensign and his orderly, though we had all heard it hundreds of times.

'Why do you look so like a rose, old chap?' continued he, addressing the ensign, who blushed, perspired, and smiled, so that it was pitiful to see him. 'Never mind, old chap! I was just like you once, and now look what a fine fellow I am. You let a young fellow straight from Russia in here—haven't we seen them?—and he gets spasms or rheumatism or something; and here am I settled here, and it's my house and my bed and all, d'you see?'

And thereupon he drank another glass of vodka, and looking fixedly at Kraft, said, 'Eh?'

¹ It is customary, especially among the peasants and soldiers, to wrap long strips of linen round the feet and legs instead of wearing stockings.

‘That is what I respect! Here’s a genuine old Caucasian! Permit me to shake hands.’

And Kraft, pushing us all aside, forced his way to Trosenko, and catching hold of his hand shook it with peculiar emotion.

‘Yes,’ continued Kraft, ‘we may say we have gone through every kind of experience here. In ‘45 you were present, Captain, were you not?—you remember the night between the 12th and 13th, when we spent the night knee-deep in mud and next day captured the barricades they had made of felled trees. I was attached to the commander-in-chief at the time, and we took fifteen barricades that one day,—you remember, Captain?’

Trosenko nodded affirmatively, stuck out his nether lip and screwed up his eyes.

‘You see . . .’ began Kraft, with great animation, making unsuitable gestures with his hands, and addressing the Major.

But the Major, who had, in all probability, heard the story more than once, suddenly looked at the speaker with such dim, dull eyes, that Kraft turned away from him and addressed me and Bolhov, looking alternately at one and the other. But he did not give a single glance at Trosenko during the whole of his narration.

‘Well then, you see, when we went out in the morning, the commander-in-chief said to me, “Kraft, take those barricades!” Well, you know, a soldier’s duty is not to reason—it’s hand to cap, and “Yes, your Excellency!” and off. Only as we drew near the first barricade I turned and said to the soldiers, “Now then, lads, don’t funk it, but look sharp. If any one hangs back

I'll cut him down myself!" With Russian soldiers, you know, one has to speak straight out. Suddenly a bomb . . . I look, one soldier down, another, a third, . . . then bullets came whizzing . . . vzin! . . . vzin! . . . vzin! . . . "On!" I cry, "On, follow me!" Just as we got there, I look and see a . . . a . . . you know . . . what do you call it? and the narrator flourished his arms, trying to find the word he wanted.

'A scarp?' suggested Bolhov.

'No . . . Ach! what is the word? Good heavens, what is it? . . . A scarp!' he said quickly. 'So, "fix bayonets! Hurrah! ta-ra, ta-ta-ta!" not a sign of the enemy! Everybody was surprised, you know. Well, that's all right; we go on to the second barricade. Ah, that was a totally different matter. Our mettle was now up, you know. Just as we reached it I look and see the second barricade, and we could not advance. There was a what's-its-name . . . now, what do you call it? Ach! what is it? . . .'

Another scarp, perhaps,' I suggested.

'Not at all,' he said crossly: 'not a scarp but—oh dear, what do you call it?' and he made an awkward gesture with his hands. Oh, good heavens, what is it?' He seemed so distressed that one involuntarily wished to help him.

'A river, perhaps,' said Bolhov.

'No, only a scarp! Hardly had we got down, when, will you believe it, such a hell of fire . . .'

At this moment some one outside the tent asked for me. It was Maksimov. And as, after having heard the different histories of these two barricades, there were still thirteen left, I was glad to

seize the excuse to return to my platoon. Trosenko came out with me.

‘It’s all lies,’ he said to me when we were a few steps from the hut; ‘he never was near those barricades at all,’ and Trosenko laughed so heartily that I, too, enjoyed the joke.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was already dark, and only the watch-fires dimly lit up the camp when, after the horses were groomed, I rejoined my men. A large stump lay smouldering on the charcoal. Only three men sat round it: Antonov, who was turning a little pot of *ryabco*¹ on the fire; Zhdanov, who was dreamily poking the embers with a stick, and Chikin, with his pipe, which never would draw well. The rest had already lain down to sleep—some under the ammunition wagons, some on the hay, some by the camp-fires. By the dim light of the charcoal I could distinguish familiar backs, legs, and heads, and among the latter that of the young recruit who, drawn close to the fire, seemed to be already sleeping. Antonov made room for me. I sat down by him and lit a cigarette. The smell of mist and the smoke of damp wood filled the air and made one’s eyes smart, and, as before, a dank drizzle kept falling from the dismal sky.

One could hear the regular sound of snoring near by, the crackling of branches in the fire, a few words now and then, and the clattering of muskets among the infantry. The camp watch-

¹ *Ryabco*, soldier’s food, made of soaked hard-tack and dripping.—L. T.

fires glowed all around, lighting up within narrow circles the dark shadows of the soldiers near them. Where the light fell by the nearest fires, I could distinguish the figures of naked soldiers waving their shirts close over the fire. There were still many who had not lain down, but moved and spoke, collected on a space of some eighty square yards ; but the gloomy dull night gave a peculiar mysterious character to all this movement, as if each one felt the dark silence and feared to break its calm monotony.

When I began to speak, I felt that my voice sounded strange, and I discerned the same frame of mind reflected in the faces of all the soldiers sitting near me. I thought that before I joined them they had been talking about their wounded comrade ; but it had not been so at all. Chikin had been telling them about receiving supplies at Tiflis, and about the scamps there.

I have noticed always and everywhere, but especially in the Caucasus, the peculiar tact with which our soldiers avoid mentioning anything that might have a bad effect on a comrade's spirits. A Russian soldier's spirit does not rest on easily inflammable enthusiasm which cools quickly, like the courage of Southern nations ; it is as difficult to inflame him as it is to depress him. He does not need scenes, speeches, warcries, songs, and drums ; on the contrary, he needs quiet, order, and an absence of any affectation. In a Russian, a real Russian, soldier, you will never find any bragging, swagger, or desire to befog or excite himself in time of danger ; on the contrary, modesty, simplicity, and a capacity for seeing in peril something quite else than the

danger, are the distinctive features of his character. I have seen a soldier wounded in the leg, who, in the first instant, thought only of the hole in his new sheepskin cloak ; and an artillery outrider, who, creeping from beneath a horse that was killed under him, began unbuckling the girths to save the saddle. Who does not remember the incident at the siege of Gergebel, when the fuse of a loaded bomb caught fire in the laboratory and an artillery sergeant ordered two soldiers to take the bomb and run to throw it into the ditch, and how the soldiers did not run to the nearest spot, by the Colonel's tent, which stood over the ditch, but took it farther on, so as not to wake the gentlemen asleep in the tent, and were consequently both blown to pieces. I remember also, how, in the expedition of 1852, something led a young soldier, while in action, to say he thought the platoon would never escape, and how the whole platoon angrily attacked him for such evil words, which they did not like even to repeat. And now, when the thought of Velenchuk must have been in the mind of each one, and when we might expect Tartars to steal up at any moment and fire a volley at us, every one listened to Chikin's sprightly stories, and no one referred either to the day's action, or to the present danger, or to the wounded man ; as if it had all happened goodness knows how long ago, or had never happened at all. But it seemed to me that their faces were rather sterner than usual, that they did not listen to Chikin so very attentively, and that even Chikin himself felt he was not being listened to, but talked for the sake of talkin'.

Maksimov joined us at the fire, and sat down beside me. Chikin made room for him, stopped speaking, and started sucking at his pipe once more.

‘The infantry have been sending to the camp for vodka,’ said Maksimov after a considerable silence; ‘they have just returned.’ He spat into the fire. ‘The sergeant says they saw our man.’

‘Is he alive?’ asked Antonov, turning the pot.

‘No, he’s dead.’

The young recruit suddenly raised his head in the little red cap, looked intently for a minute over the fire at Maksimov and at me, then quickly let his head sink again and wrapped himself in his cloak.

‘There now, it wasn’t for nought that death had laid its hand on him when I had to wake him in the “park” this morning,’ said Antonov.

‘Nonsense!’ said Zhdanov, turning the smouldering log, and all were silent.

Then, amid the general silence, came the report of a gun from the camp behind us. Our drummers beat an answering tattoo. When the last vibration ceased Zhdanov rose first, taking off his cap. We all followed his example.

Through the deep silence of the night rose an harmonious choir of manly voices:

‘Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done as in heaven so on earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the evil one.’

‘We had a man in ’45 who was wounded in the same place,’ said Antonov, when we had put on

our caps and again sat down by the fire. 'We carried him about with us on a gun for two days—do you remember Shevchenko, Zhdanov—and then we just left him there under a tree.'

At this moment an infantryman with tremendous whiskers and moustaches, carrying a musket and pouch, came up to our fire.

'Give me a light for my pipe, comrades,' said he.

'All right, smoke away: there's fire enough,' remarked Chikin.

'I suppose it's about Dargo¹ you are telling, comrade,' said the infantry soldier to Antonov.

'Yes, about Dargo in '45,' Antonov replied.

The infantryman shook his head, screwed up his eyes, and sat down on his heels near us.

'Yes, all sorts of things happened there,' he remarked.

'Why did you leave him behind?' I asked Antonov.

'He was suffering much with his stomach. As long as we halted it was all right, but as soon as we moved on he screamed aloud and asked for God's sake to be left behind—but we felt it a pity. But when *he* began to give it us hot, killed three of our men from the guns and an officer besides, and we somehow got separated from our battery It was such a go! We thought we should not get our guns away. It was muddy and no mistake!'

'The mud was worst under the Indeysky² Mountain,' remarked one of the soldiers.

¹ Dargo, in the Terek Territory, was the headquarters of Shamil until 1845.

² The soldier miscalls the Andiysky chain of mountains 'Indeysky,' apparently connecting them with India.

‘Yes, it was there he got more worse ! So we considered it with Anoshenka—he was an old artillery sergeant. “Now really he can’t live, and he’s asking for God’s sake to be left behind ; let us leave him here.” So we decided. There was a tree, such a branchy one, growing there. Well, we took some soaked hard-tack Zhdanov had, and put it near him, leant him against the tree, put a clean shirt on him, and said good-bye, —all as it should be—and left him.’

‘And was he a good soldier ?’

‘Yes, he was all right as a soldier,’ remarked Zhdanov.

‘And what became of him God only knows,’ continued Antonov ; ‘many of the likes of us perished there.’

‘What, at Dargo ?’ said the infantryman, as he rose, scraping out his pipe, and again half-closing his eyes and shaking his head ; ‘all sorts of things happened there.’

And he left us.

‘And have we many men still in the battery who were at Dargo ?’ I asked.

‘Many ? why, there’s Zhdanov, myself, Patsan, who is now on furlough, and there may be six others, not more.’

‘And why’s our Patsan holiday-making all this time ?’ said Chikin, stretching out his legs, and lying down with his head on a log. ‘I reckon he’s been away getting on for a year.’

‘And you, have you had your year at home ?’ I asked Zhdanov.

‘No, I did not go,’ he answered unwillingly.

‘You see, it’s all right to go,’ said Antonov, ‘if they’re well off at home, or if you are yourself

fit to work ; then it 's tempting to go and they 're glad to see you.'

' But where 's the use of going when one 's one of two brothers ? ' continued Zhdanov. ' It 's all they can do to get their bread ; how should they feed a soldier like me ? I 'm no help to them after twenty-five years ' service. And who knows whether they 're alive still ? '

' Haven 't you ever written ? ' I asked.

' Yes, indeed ! I wrote two letters, but never had an answer. Either they 're dead, or simply won 't write because they 're living in poverty themselves ; so where 's the good ? '

' And is it long since you wrote ? '

' I wrote last when we returned from Dargo . . . Won 't you sing us " The Birch-Tree " ? ' he said, turning to Antonov, who sat leaning his elbows on his knees and humming a song.

Antonov began to sing ' The Birch-Tree. '

' This is the song Daddy Zhdanov likes most best of all, ' said Chikin to me in a whisper, pulling at my cloak. ' Sometimes he right down weeps when Philip Antonov sings it. '

Zhdanov at first sat quite motionless, with eyes fixed on the glimmering embers, and his face, lit up by the reddish light, seemed very gloomy ; then his jaws below his ears began to move faster and faster, and at last he rose, and spreading out his cloak, lay down in the shadow behind the fire. Either it was his tossing and groaning as he settled down to sleep, or it may have been the effect of Velenchuk 's death and of the dull weather, but it really seemed to me that he was crying.

The bottom of the charred log, bursting every now and then into flames, lit up Antonov 's figure,

with his grey moustaches, red face, and the medals on the cloak that he had thrown over his shoulders ; or it lit up some one's boots, head, or back. The same gloomy drizzle fell from above, the air was still full of moisture and smoke, all around were the same bright spots of fires, now dying down, and amid the general stillness came the mournful sound of Antonov's song ; and when that stopped for an instant, the faint nocturnal sounds of the camp—snoring, clanking of sentries' muskets, voices speaking in low tones—took part.

‘Second watch ! Makatyuk and Zhdanov !’ cried Maksimov.

Antonov stopped singing. Zhdanov rose, sighed, stepped across the log, and went slowly towards the guns.

June 15, 1855.

MEETING A MOSCOW ACQUAINTANCE IN THE DETACHMENT

From *Prince Nekhlyudov's Caucasian Memoirs*

LIST OF CHARACTERS IN
MEETING A MOSCOW ACQUAINTANCE

GUSKÓV, nicknamed Guskantíni, condemned for punishment to serve as a private.

PAUL DmÍTRICH, Adjutant.

NICHOLAS IvÁNICH S—, Lieutenant-Captain ; a good-natured officer.

NIKÍTA, an Orderly.

MAKATYÚK, another Orderly.

ALEXÉY IvÁNICH, a Captain.

ANDRÉYEV, a soldier.

MEETING A MOSCOW ACQUAINTANCE IN THE DETACHMENT

WE were out with a detachment. The work in hand was almost done, the cutting through the forest was nearly finished, and we were expecting every day to receive orders from headquarters to retire to the fort.

Our division of the battery guns was placed on the slope of a steep mountain range which stretched down to the rapid little mountain river Mechik, and we had to command the plain in front. Occasionally, especially towards evening, on this picturesque plain, beyond the range of our guns, groups of peaceable mountaineers on horseback appeared here and there, curious to see the Russian camp. The evening was clear, quiet, and fresh, as December evenings usually are in the Caucasus. The sun was setting behind the steep spur of the mountain range to the left, and threw rosy beams on the tents scattered over the mountain side, on the moving groups of soldiers, and on our two guns, standing as if with outstretched necks, heavy and motionless, on the earthwork battery close by. The infantry picket, stationed on a knoll to our left, was sharply outlined against the clear light of the sunset, with its piles of arms, the figure of its sentry, its

group of soldiers, and the smoke of its watch-fires. To the right and to the left, half-way down the hill, white tents gleamed on the trodden black earth, and beyond the tents loomed the bare black trunks of the plane forest, where axes continually rang, fires crackled, and trees fell crashing down. On all sides the pale bluish smoke rose in columns towards the blue frosty sky. Beyond the tents, and on the low ground by the stream, Cossacks, dragoons, and artillery drivers trailed, with stampings and snortings, returning from watering their horses. It was beginning to freeze ; all sounds were heard with unusual distinctness, and one could see far into the plain through the clear rarefied air. The groups of natives, no longer exciting the curiosity of our men, rode quietly over the light-yellow stubble of the maize-fields. Here and there through the trees could be seen the tall posts of Tartar cemeteries, and the smoke of their *aouls*.

Our tent was pitched near the guns, on a dry and elevated spot whence the view was specially extensive. By the tent, close to the battery, we had cleared a space for the games of Gorodki,¹ or Choushki. Here the attentive soldiers had erected for us rustic seats and a small table. Because of all these conveniences, our comrades the artillery officers, and some of the infantry, liked to assemble at our battery, and called this place 'The Club'.

¹ Gorodki is a game in which short, thick, sticks are arranged in certain figures within squares. Each side has its own square, and each player in turn throws a stick to try to clear out the enemy's square. The side wins which accomplishes this first with the six figures in which the little sticks are successively arranged.

It was a beautiful evening, the best players had come, and we were playing Gorodki. I, Ensign D., and Lieutenant O., lost two games running, and to the general amusement and laughter of the onlooking officers, and of soldiers and orderlies who were watching us from their tents, we twice carried the winners pickaback from one end of the ground to the other. Specially amusing was the position of the enormous, fat Lieutenant-Captain S., who, puffing and smiling good-humouredly, with his feet trailing on the ground, rode on the back of the small and puny Lieutenant O. But it was growing late. The orderlies brought three tumblers of tea without any saucers, for the whole six of us, and having finished our game we came to the rustic seats. Near them stood a short, bandy-legged man whom I did not know, dressed in a sheepskin coat, and with a large, white, long-woolled sheepskin cap on his head. As soon as we approached him he hesitatingly took off and put on his cap several times, and repeatedly seemed on the point of coming up to us but then stopped again. Having, I suppose, decided that he could no longer remain unnoticed, this stranger again raised his cap, and passing round us approached Lieutenant-Captain S.

‘Ah, Guskantini ! Well, what is it, old chap ?’ said S., still continuing to smile good-humouredly after his ride.

Guskantini, as S. called him, put on his cap at once, and pretended to put his hands in the pockets of his sheepskin coat ; but on the side turned to me, I could see it had no pocket, so that his little red hand remained in an awkward position. I tried to make up my mind what this

man could be (a cadet or an officer reduced to the ranks ?), and without noticing that my attention (the attention of an unknown officer) confused him, I looked intently at his clothing and general appearance. He seemed to be about thirty. His small round grey eyes seemed to look sleepily and yet anxiously from under the dirty white wool which hung over his face from his shaggy cap. The thick irregular nose between the sunken cheeks accentuated his sickly unnatural emaciation. His lips, but slightly covered with thin light-coloured moustaches, were continually in motion, as if trying to put on now one, now another expression. But all these expressions seemed unfinished ; his face still kept its one predominant expression of mingled fear and hurry. His thin scraggy neck was enveloped in a green woollen scarf partly hidden under his sheepskin coat. The coat was worn bare and was short ; it was trimmed with dog's fur round the collar and at the false pockets. He had checked greyish trousers on, and soldier's boots with short unblacked tops.

'Please don't trouble,' said I, when he again raised his cap, looking timidly at me.

He bowed with a grateful look, put on his cap, and taking from his trousers-pocket a dirty calico tobacco-pouch tied with a cord, began to make a cigarette.

It was not long since I myself had been a cadet ; an old cadet, who could no longer act the good-humoured attentive younger comrade to the officers, and a cadet without means. Understanding, therefore, all the wretchedness of such a position for a proud man no longer young, I felt

for all who were in that state, and tried to discern their characters and the degree and direction of their mental capacities, in order to be able to judge the extent of their moral suffering. This cadet, or reduced officer, judging by his restless look and the purposely varying expression of his face, seemed to be far from stupid, but full of self-love, and therefore very pitiable.

Lieutenant-Captain S. proposed another game of Gorodki, the losers, besides carrying the winners pickaback, to stand a couple of bottles of claret, with rum, sugar, cinnamon, and cloves, to make mulled wine, which was very popular in our detachment that winter because of the cold weather. Guskantini, as S. again called him, was also asked to join, but before beginning, evidently wavering between the pleasure this invitation gave him and fear of some kind, he led Lieutenant-Captain S. aside and whispered something into his ear. The good-natured Lieutenant-Captain slapped him on the stomach with the palm of his big fat hand, and answered aloud, 'Never mind, old chap, I'll give you credit !'

When the game was finished, and when, the side of the lower-grade stranger having won, he should have ridden on one of our officers, Ensign D., the latter blushed, turned aside to the seats, and offered the stranger some cigarettes by way of ransom. When the mulled wine had been ordered, and one could hear Nikita's bustling arrangements in the orderlies' tent, and how he sent a messenger for cinnamon and cloves, and could then see his back, first here and then there, bulging the dirty sides of the tent,—we, the seven of us, sat down by the little table, drinking tea in turns out of

the three tumblers, and looking out over the plain, which began to veil itself in evening twilight, while we talked and laughed over the different incidents of the game. The stranger in the sheepskin coat took no part in the conversation, persistently refused the tea I repeatedly offered him, and, sitting on the ground Tartar-fashion, made cigarettes one after the other out of tobacco-dust and smoked them, evidently not so much for his own pleasure as to give himself an appearance of being occupied. When it was mentioned that a retreat was expected next day, and that perhaps we should have a fight, he rose to his knees and, addressing only Lieutenant-Captain S., said that he had just been at home with the Adjutant and had himself written out an order to move next day. We all were silent while he spoke, and, though he was evidently abashed, we made him repeat this communication—highly interesting to us. He repeated what he had said, adding, however, that at the time the order arrived, he was *with*, and *sat with*, the Adjutant, *with whom he lived*.

‘Mind, if you are not telling us a lie, old chap, I must be off to my company to give some orders for to-morrow,’ said Lieutenant-Captain S.

‘No. . . . Why should? . . . Is it likely? . . . It is certain . . .’ began the stranger, but stopped suddenly, having evidently determined to feel hurt, frowned unnaturally and, muttering something between his teeth, again began making cigarettes. But the dregs of tobacco-dust that he could extract from his pouch being insufficient, he asked S. to *favour him with the loan of a cigarette*. We long continued among ourselves that

monotonous military chatter familiar to all who have been on campaign. We complained, ever in the same terms, of the tediousness and duration of the expedition ; discussed our commanders in the same old way ; and, just as often before, we praised one comrade, pitied another, were astonished that So-and-so won so much, and that So-and-so lost so much at cards, and so on, and so on.

‘Our Adjutant has got himself into a mess, and no mistake,’ said Lieutenant-Captain S. ‘He always used to win when he was on the staff—whatever he sat down with he’d pluck clean—but now these last two months he does nothing but lose. He has not hit it off this campaign ! I should think he’s lost 2,000 rubles in money, and things for another 500 : the carpet he won of Mukhin, Nikitin’s pistols, the gold watch from Sada’s that Vorontsov gave him—have all gone.’

‘Serves him right,’ said Lieutenant O. ; ‘he gulled everybody ; it was impossible to play with him.’

‘He gulled everybody, and now he himself is gravelled,’ and Lieutenant-Captain S. laughed good-naturedly. ‘Guskov, here, lives with him—the Adjutant nearly lost him one day at cards !—Really.—Am I not right, old chap ?’ he said, turning to Guskov.

Guskov laughed. It was a pitifully sickly laugh which completely changed the expression of his face. This change suggested to me the idea that I had seen and known the man before ; besides, Guskov, his real name, was familiar to me. But how and when I had seen him I was quite unable to recollect.

‘Yes,’ said Guskov, who kept raising his hand to his moustaches and letting it sink again without touching them, ‘Paul Dmitrich has been very unlucky this campaign: such a *veine de malheur*,’¹ he added, in carefully spoken but good French, and I again thought I had met, and even often met, him somewhere. ‘I know Paul Dmitrich well; he has great confidence in me,’ continued he; ‘we are old acquaintances—I mean he is fond of me,’ he added, evidently alarmed at his own too bold assertion of being an old acquaintance of the Adjutant. ‘Paul Dmitrich plays remarkably well, but now it is incomprehensible what has happened to him; he seems quite lost—*la chance a tourné*,’² he said, addressing himself chiefly to me.

At first we had listened to Guskov with condescending attention; but as soon as he uttered this second French phrase we all involuntarily turned away from him.

‘I have played hundreds of times with him,’ said Lieutenant O., ‘and you won’t deny that it is *strange*’ (he put a special emphasis on the word ‘strange’), ‘remarkably strange, that I never once won even a twenty-kopek piece of him. How is it I win when playing with others?’

‘Paul Dmitrich plays admirably: I have long known him,’ said I. I had really known the Adjutant for some years; had more than once seen him playing for stakes high in proportion to the officers’ means; and had admired his handsome, rather stern, and ever imperturbably calm face, his slow, Little-Russian pronunciation, his beautiful things, his horses, his leisurely, Little-

¹ Run of ill-luck.

² The luck has turned.

Russian disposition, and especially his ability to play with self-control—systematically and pleasantly. I confess that more than once, when looking at his plump white hands, with a diamond ring on the first finger, as he beat my cards one after the other, I was enraged with this ring, with the white hands, with the whole person of the Adjutant, and evil thoughts concerning him rose in my mind. But on thinking matters over in cool blood I became convinced that he was simply a more sagacious player than all those with whom he happened to play. I was confirmed in this by the fact that when listening to his general reflections on gaming—how, having been lucky starting with a small stake, one should follow up one's luck; how in certain cases one ought to stop playing; that the first rule was to play for *ready-money*, etc., etc.—it was clear that he always won simply because he was cleverer and more self-possessed than the rest of us. And it now appeared that this self-possessed, strong player had, in the detachment, lost completely: not only money, but other belongings as well—which among officers indicates the lowest depth of loss.

'He was always devilish lucky when playing against me,' continued Lieutenant O.; 'I have sworn never to play with him again.'

'What a queer fellow you are, old man!' said S., winking at me so that his whole head moved, while he addressed O.; 'you have lost some 300 rubles to him—lost it, haven't you?'

'More!' said the Lieutenant crossly.

'And now you've suddenly come to your senses; but it's too late, old chap! Every one

else has long known him to be the sharper of our regiment,' said S., hardly able to refrain from laughter, and highly delighted at his invention.

'Here's Guskov himself—he prepares the cards for him. That is why they are friends, old chap! . . .' And Lieutenant-Captain S. laughed good-humouredly so that he shook all over and spilt some of the mulled wine he held in his hand. A faint tinge of colour seemed to rise on Guskov's thin, yellow face; he opened his mouth repeatedly, lifted his hands to his moustaches and let them drop again to the places where his pockets should have been, several times began to rise but sat down again, and at last said in an unnatural voice, turning to S.:

'This is not a joke, Nicholas Ivanich, you are saying *such things!* And in the presence of people who don't know me and who see me in a common sheepskin coat, . . . because . . .' His voice failed him, and again the little red hands with their dirty nails moved from his coat to his face; now smoothing his moustaches or hair, now touching his nose, rubbing his eye, or unnecessarily scratching his cheek.

'What's the good of talking; every one knows it, old chap!' continued S., really enjoying his joke and not in the least noticing Guskov's excitement. Guskov again muttered something, and leaning his right elbow on his left knee in a most unnatural positon, looked at S. and tried to smile contemptuously.

'Yes,' thought I, watching that smile, 'I have not only seen him before, but have spoken with him somewhere.'

'We must have met somewhere before,' I said

to him when, under the influence of the general silence, S.'s laughter began to subside.

Guskov's mobile face suddenly brightened, and his eyes, taking for the first time a sincerely pleased expression, turned to me.

'Certainly; I knew you at once!' he began in French. 'In '48 I had the pleasure of meeting you rather often in Moscow, at my sister's—the Ivashins.'

I apologized for not having recognized him in his present costume. He rose, approached me, and with his moist hand irresolutely and feebly pressed mine. Instead of looking at me, whom he professed to be so glad to see, he looked round in an unpleasantly boastful kind of way at the other officers. Either because he had been recognized by me who had seen him some years before in a drawing-room in a dress-coat, or because that recollection suddenly raised him in his own esteem, his face and even his movements, as it seemed to me, changed completely. They now expressed a lively intellect, childish self-satisfaction at the consciousness of that intellect, and a kind of contemptuous indifference. So that, I admit, notwithstanding the pitiful position he was in, my old acquaintance no longer inspired me with sympathy but with an almost inimical feeling.

I vividly recalled our first meeting. In '48, during my stay in Moscow, I often visited Ivashin. We had grown up together and were old friends. His wife was a pleasant hostess and what is considered an amiable woman, but I never liked her. The winter I visited them, she often spoke with ill-concealed pride of her brother, who had lately finished his studies, and was, it seemed, among

the best-educated and most popular young men in the best Petersburg society. Knowing by reputation Guskov's father, who was very rich and held an important position, and knowing his sister's leanings, I was prejudiced before I met Guskov. One evening, having come to see Ivashin, I found there a very pleasant-looking young man, not tall, in a black swallow-tail coat and white waistcoat and tie ; but the host omitted to introduce us to one another. The young man, evidently prepared to go to a ball, stood hat in hand in front of Ivashin, hotly but politely arguing about a common acquaintance of ours who had recently distinguished himself in the Hungarian campaign. He was maintaining that this acquaintance of ours was not at all a hero, or a man born for war, as was said of him, but merely a clever and well-educated man. I remember that I took part against Guskov in the dispute, and went to an extreme, even undertaking to show that intelligence and education were always in inverse ratio to bravery ; and I remember how Guskov pleasantly and cleverly argued that bravery is an inevitable result of intelligence and of a certain degree of development ; with which view (considering myself to be intelligent and well-educated) I could not help secretly agreeing. I remember also how, at the end of our conversation, Ivashin's wife introduced us to one another, and how her brother, with a condescending smile, gave me his little hand, on which he had not quite finished drawing a kid-glove, and pressed mine in the same feeble and irresolute manner as he did now. Though prejudiced against Guskov, I could not then help doing him the

justice of agreeing with his sister that he really was an intelligent and pleasant young man, who ought to succeed in society. He was exceedingly neat, elegantly dressed, fresh-looking, and had self-confidently modest manners and a very youthful, almost childlike, appearance, which made one unconsciously forgive the expression of self-satisfaction and of a desire to mitigate the degree of his superiority over you, which his intelligent face, and especially his smile, always showed. It was reported that he had great success among the Moscow ladies that winter. Meeting him at his sister's, I could only infer the amount of truth in these reports from the expression of pleasure and satisfaction he always wore, and from the indiscreet stories he sometimes told. We met some half-dozen times and talked a good deal, or, rather, he talked a good deal and I listened. He usually spoke French, in a very correct, fluent, and ornamental style, and knew how, politely and gently, to interrupt others in conversation. In general he treated me, and every one, rather condescendingly ; and, as always happens to me with people who are firmly convinced that I ought to be treated with condescension, and whom I do not know well, I felt that he was quite right in so doing.

Now, when he sat down beside me and gave me his hand of his own accord, I vividly recalled his former supercilious expression, and thought that he, as one of inferior rank, was not making quite a fair use of the advantages of his position in questioning me, an officer, in an offhand manner, as to what I had been doing all this time and how I came to be here. Though I answered

in Russian every time, he always began again in French, in which it was noticeable that he no longer expressed himself as easily as formerly. About himself he only told me in passing that after that unfortunate and stupid affair of his (I did not know what this affair was, and he did not tell me) he had been three months under arrest, and was afterwards sent to the Caucasus to the N—— Regiment, and had now served three years as a private.

‘ You would not believe,’ said he, in French, ‘ what I have suffered at the hands of the officer sets ! It was lucky I formerly knew this Adjutant we have just been talking about : he is really a good fellow,’ he remarked condescendingly.

I am living with him, and it is, after all, some mitigation. *Oui, mon cher, les jours se suivent, mais ne se ressemblent pas,*¹ he added, but suddenly became confused, blushed, and rose from his seat, having noticed that the Adjutant we had been talking about was approaching us.

‘ It is such a consolation to meet a man like you,’ whispered Guskov as he was leaving my side ; ‘ there is very very much I should like to talk over with you.’

I told him I should be very glad, though I confess that, in reality, Guskov inspired me with an unsympathetic painful kind of pity.

I foresaw that I should feel uncomfortable when alone with him, but I wanted to hear a good many things from him, especially how it was that, while his father was so wealthy, he was poor, as his clothes and habits showed.

¹ Yes, my dear, the days follow, but do not resemble one another.

The Adjutant greeted us all except Guskov, and sat down beside me where the latter had been.

Paul Dmitrich, whom I had always known as a calm, deliberate, strong gambler and a moneyed man, was now very different from what he had been in the flourishing days of his card-playing. He seemed to be in a hurry, kept looking round at everybody, and before five minutes were over he, who always used to be reluctant to play, now proposed to Lieutenant O. that the latter should start a 'bank'.

Lieutenant O. declined, under pretext of having his duties to attend to ; his real reason being that, knowing how little money and how few things Paul Dmitrich still possessed, he considered it unwise to risk his three hundred rubles against the hundred or less he might win.

'Is it true, Paul Dmitrich,' said the Lieutenant, evidently wishing to avoid a repetition of the request, 'that we are to leave here to-morrow ?'

'I don't know,' replied Paul Dmitrich, 'but the orders are, to be ready ! But really we'd better have a game : I would stake my Kabarda¹ horse.'

'No, to-day . . . '

'The grey one. Come what may ! Or else, if you like, we'll play for money. Well ?'

'Oh, but I—I would readily—you must not think—' began Lieutenant O., answering his own doubts, 'but, you know, we may have an attack or a march before us to-morrow, and I want to have a good sleep.'

The Adjutant rose, and putting his hands in his

¹ Kabarda is^{*} a district in the Terek Territory of the Caucasus, and Kabarda horses are famous for their powers of endurance.

pockets began pacing up and down. His face assumed the usual cold and somewhat proud expression which I liked in him.

‘Won’t you have a glass of mulled wine?’ I asked.

‘I don’t mind if I do,’ he said, coming towards me.

But Guskov hurriedly took the tumbler out of my hand and carried it to the Adjutant, trying at the same time not to look at him. But he did not notice one of the cords with which the tent was fastened, stumbled over it, and letting the tumbler drop, fell on his hands.

‘What a muff!’ said the Adjutant, who had already stretched out his hand for the tumbler. Every one burst out laughing, including Guskov, who was rubbing his bony knee, which he could not have hurt in falling.

‘That’s the way the bear served the hermit,’ continued the Adjutant. ‘It’s the way he serves me every day! He has wrenched out all the tent-pegs stumbling over them.’ Guskov, paying no heed to him, apologized, looking at me with a scarcely perceptible, sad smile, which seemed to say that I alone could understand him. He was very pitiable, but the Adjutant, his protector, seemed for some reason to be angry with his lodger, and would not let him alone.

‘Oh yes, he is a sharp boy, turn him which way you will.’

‘But who does not stumble over those pegs, Paul Dmitrich?’ said Guskov; ‘you yourself stumbled the day before yesterday.’

‘I, old fellow, am not in the ranks; smartness is not expected of me.’

'He may drag his feet,' added Lieutenant-Captain S., 'but a private must skip . . .'

'What curious jokes! . . .' said Guskov, almost in a whisper, with eyes cast down. The Adjutant evidently did not feel indifferent to his lodger; he watched greedily every word he uttered.

'He'll have to be sent to the ambuscades again,' he said, addressing S., and winking towards the disgraced one.

'Well, then, tears will flow again,' said S., laughing.

Guskov no longer looked at me, but pretended to be getting tobacco from the pouch which had long been empty.

'Get ready to go to the outposts, old chap,' said S., laughing, 'the scouts have reported that the camp will be attacked to-night, so reliable lads will have to be told off.'

Guskov smiled undecidedly, as if preparing to say something, and cast several imploring looks at S.

'Well, you know I have been before, and I shall go again if I am sent,' muttered he.

'Yes, and you will be sent!'

'Well, and I'll go. What of that?'

'Yes, just as you did at Argun—ran away from the ambuscade and threw away your gun,' said the Adjutant, and, turning away from him, began telling us about the order for the next day.

It was true that the enemy was expected to fire at the camp in the night, and a movement of some sort was to take place next day. After talking on various subjects of general interest for a while, the Adjutant, as if he had chanced suddenly to recollect it, proposed to Lieutenant O. to have

a little game. The Lieutenant quite unexpectedly accepted, and they went with S. and the Ensign to the Adjutant's tent, where a green folding-table and cards were to be found. The Captain, who was commander of our division, went to his tent to sleep, the other gentlemen also went away, and Guskov and I were left alone.

I had not been mistaken ; I really felt uncomfortable alone with him, and I could not help rising and pacing up and down the battery. Guskov walked silently by my side, turning round hurriedly and nervously so as neither to lag behind nor pass before me.

‘ I am not in your way ? ’ he said, in a meek, sad voice. As far as I could judge in the darkness his face seemed deeply thoughtful and melancholy.

‘ Not at all,’ I answered, but as he did not begin to speak, and I did not know what to say to him, we walked a good while in silence.

The twilight was now quite replaced by the darkness of night, but over the black outlines of the mountains the sheet-lightnings so common there in the evening flashed brightly. Above our heads tiny stars twinkled in the pale-blue frosty sky, and the red flames of smoking watch-fires glared all around : the tents near us seemed grey, and the embankment of our battery a gloomy black. From the fire nearest to us, round which our orderlies sat warming themselves and talking low, now and then a gleam fell on the brass of our heavy guns, and made visible the figure of the sentry, as, with his cloak thrown over his shoulders, he walked with measured steps along the embankment.

‘ You can't think what a relief it is to me to

talk to a man like you ! ' said Guskov, though he had not yet spoken to me about anything. ' Only a man who has been in my position can understand it. '

I did not know what to answer, and again we were silent, though it was evident that he wished to speak out and I wished to hear him.

‘ For what were you. . . . What was the cause of your misfortune ? ’ I asked at last, unable to think of any better way to start the conversation.

‘ Did you not hear about that unfortunate affair with Metenin ? ’

‘ Oh yes ; a duel, I think. I heard some reference to it,’ I answered. ‘ You see, I have been some time in the Caucasus.’

‘ No, not a duel, but that stupid and terrible affair ! I will tell you all about it if you have not heard it. It was that same year when you and I used to meet at my sister’s. I was then living in Petersburg. But first I must tell you that I then had what is called *une position dans le monde*,¹ and a tolerably lucrative, if not brilliant one. *Mon père me donnait 10,000 par an.*² In ‘49 I was promised a place in the embassy at Turin ; an uncle on my mother’s side had influence and was always ready to give me a lift. It’s now a thing of the past. *J’étais reçu dans la meilleure société de Pétersbourg ; je pouvais prétendre*³ to make a good match. I had learnt—as we all learn at school ; so that I possessed no special education. It is true I read a good deal after-

¹ A position in the world.

² My father allowed me 10,000 rubles a year.

³ I was received in the best society of Petersburg ; I could aspire . . .

wards, *mais j'avais surtout*, you know, *ce jargon du monde*;¹ and, whatever the cause, I was considered one of the leading young men in Petersburg. What raised me most in the general estimation, *c'est cette liaison avec Mme D*—,² which was much talked of in Petersburg. But I was awfully young at the time, and set little value on these advantages. I was simply young and foolish. What more did I need? At that time in Petersburg that fellow Metenin had a reputation . . .³ And Guskov continued in this manner to tell me the story of his misfortune, which, being quite uninteresting, I shall here omit.

'Two months,' continued he, 'I was under arrest and quite alone. I don't know what did not pass through my mind in that time; but, do you know, when it was all over, when it seemed as if every link with the past was severed, it became easier for me. *Mon père, vous en avez entendu parler*³ surely: he is a man with an iron will and firm convictions; *il m'a déshérité*,⁴ and ceased all intercourse with me. According to his convictions it was the proper thing to do, and I do not blame him at all; *il a été conséquent*.⁵ And I also did not take a step to induce him to change his mind. My sister was abroad. Mme D— was the only one who wrote to me when letters were allowed, and she offered me help; but you will understand that I could not accept it, so that I had none of those trifles which somewhat mitigate such a position, you know—no

¹ But in particular I spoke the society jargon.

² Was that liaison with Mme D—.

³ My father; you will have heard him spoken of.

⁴ He disinherited me. ⁵ He has been consistent.

books, no linen, no private food, nothing. Many, very many thoughts passed through my brain at that time, and I began to look at everything with other eyes ; for instance, all that noise and gossip about me in Petersburg society no longer interested or flattered me in the least ; it all seemed ridiculous. I felt I was myself to blame ; I had been careless and young and had spoilt my career, and my only thought was how to retrieve it. And I felt I had strength and energy enough to do it. After my arrest was over, I was, as I told you, sent to the Caucasus to the N—— Regiment.

'I thought that here, in the Caucasus,' he continued, growing more and more animated, '*la vie de camp*,¹ the simple, honest men with whom I should be in contact, the war, the dangers—all this would just suit my frame of mind, and I thought I should begin life anew. *On me verra au feu*²—people would like me, would respect me not for my name only ; then I should receive a cross, become a non-commissioned officer, and at last be pardoned, and should return, *et, vous savez, avec ce prestige du malheur!*³ But *quel désenchantement!*⁴ You can't think how I was mistaken ! . . . You know the officer set of our regiment ? ' He paused for some time, probably expecting me to say that I knew how bad the society of officers here is ; but I did not reply to him. I was disgusted that—on account, no doubt, of my knowing French—he should suppose that I ought to despise the officer set, which, on the

¹ Camp life.

² I should be seen under fire.

³ You know, with the prestige that misfortune gives.

⁴ (But) what a disenchantment !

contrary, I, having lived long in the Caucasus, had fully learnt to appreciate, and which I esteemed a thousand times more than the society Mr. Guskov had left. I wished to tell him so, but his position restrained me.

‘In the N—— Regiment the officer set is a thousand times worse than here,’ he continued —‘*J’espère que c’est beaucoup dire*,¹—so that you can’t imagine what it is like ! Not to mention the cadets and the soldiers—it is just awful ! At first I was well received, that’s perfectly true, but afterwards, when they saw I couldn’t help despising them—when in those scarcely noticeable everyday relations, you know, they saw that I was a totally different sort of man, standing on a far higher level than they—they were exasperated with me, and began to retaliate by subjecting me to all kinds of petty indignities. *Ce que j’ai eu à souffrir, vous ne vous faites pas une idée.*² Then, being obliged to associate with the cadets ; and, above all, *avec les petits moyens que j’avais, je manquais de tout*,³ I had only what my sister sent me. A proof of what I have suffered is that I, with my character, *avec ma fierté, j’ai écrit à mon père*,⁴ imploring him to send me something, however little. . . . I can understand how, after five years of such a life, one may become like our cashiered officer, Dromov, who drinks with the soldiers and writes notes to all the officers begging them to *lend* him three rubles, and signs himself, “*Tout à vous Dromov.*” One needs a character

¹ I hope that is saying a good deal.

² You can have no idea of what I had to suffer.

³ With the small means I had, I lacked everything.

⁴ With my pride, I wrote to my father.

like mine in order not to sink quite into the mire in this terrible position.' He then walked silently by my side for a long time. '*Avez-vous un papiros?*'¹ he said at last. 'Yes, . . . where had I got to? Oh yes, I could not stand it. I don't mean physically, for although it was bad enough and I suffered from cold and hunger and lived like a soldier, yet the officers still had a sort of regard for me. I still had a kind of *prestige* in their eyes. They did not send me to do sentry duty or drill. I could not have borne that. But morally I suffered terribly, and, above all, I could see no escape from this position. I wrote to my uncle imploring him to transfer me to this regiment, which is at least on active duty, and I thought that here Paul Dmitrich, *qui est le fils de l'intendant de mon père*,² would be of use to me. My uncle did this much for me, and I was transferred. After that other regiment, this seemed an assembly of courtiers. And Paul Dmitrich was here; he knew who I was, and I was capitally received—at my uncle's request . . . Guskov, *vous savez*. But I noticed that these people, without education or culture, cannot respect a man nor show him respect when he is not surrounded by an aureole of wealth and rank. I noticed how, little by little, when they saw that I was poor, their behaviour to me became more and more careless, and at last almost contemptuous. It is dreadful, but it is perfectly true.

'Here I have been in action, have fought, *on m'a vu au feu*,'³ he continued, 'but when will

¹ Have you a cigarette?

² Who is the son of my father's steward.

³ I have been seen under fire.

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it end ? Never, I think ! And my strength and energy are beginning to fail. And then, I had imagined *la guerre, la vie de camp*,¹ but it turns out to be quite different from what I expected : dressed in a sheepskin, in soldier's boots, unwashed, you are sent to the outposts, and lie all night in a ditch with some Antonov or other who has been sent into the army for drunkenness, and at any moment you may be shot from behind a bush—you or Antonov, all the same. . . . That is not courage ! It is horrible. *C'est affreux, ça tue.*²

‘Well, but you may be made a non-commissioned officer for this expedition, and next year may become an ensign,’ I said.

‘Yes, possibly. I was promised it ; but that would be another two years, and it is very doubtful. And does any one realize what two such years mean ? Just imagine the life with this Paul Dmitrich : gambling, rough jokes, dissipation. . . . You want to speak out about something that has risen in your soul, but you are not understood, or you are laughed at. They talk to you not to communicate their thoughts, but to make a fool of you if possible. And it’s all so vulgar, coarse, horrid ; and all the time you feel you are a private—they always make you feel that. That is why you can’t imagine what a pleasure it is to talk *à cœur ouvert*³ to a man like you !’

I could not imagine what sort of a man I was supposed to be, and therefore did not know how to reply to him.

‘Will you have supper ?’ at this moment asked

¹ War, camp-life.

² It is dreadful, it is killing.

³ Quite frankly.

Nikita, who had approached unseen in the darkness, and who, I noticed, was not pleased at the presence of my visitor: 'there's nothing but dumplings and a little beef left.'

'And has the captain had his supper?'

'He's asleep long ago,' said Nikita, crossly.

On my telling him to bring us something to eat and some vodka, he muttered discontentedly, and went slowly to his tent. However, after grumbling there a bit, he brought us a travelling-case, on which he placed a candle (round which he first tied a piece of paper to keep the wind off), a saucepan, a pot of mustard, a tin cup with a handle, and a bottle of vodka bitters. Having arranged all this, Nikita stood some time near us and watched with evident disapproval while Guskov and I drank some of the spirit. By the dim light of the candle shining through the paper the only things one could see amid the surrounding darkness were the sealskin with which the travelling-case was covered, the supper standing on it, and Guskov's face, his sheepskin coat, and the little red hands with which he took the dumplings out of the saucepan. All around was black, and only by looking intently could one discern the black battery; the equally black figure of the sentry visible over the breastwork, the watch-fires around, and the reddish stars above. Guskov smiled just perceptibly in a sad and bashful way, as if it were awkward for him to look me in the eyes after his confession. He drank another cup of vodka, and ate greedily, scraping out the saucepan.

'Yes, it must at any rate be some relief to you,' I remarked, in order to say something, 'to be

acquainted with the adjutant ; I have heard he is a very decent fellow.'

'Yes,' answered he, 'he is a kind-hearted man, but he can't help being what he is ; he can't be a man : with his education one can't expect it,' and he suddenly seemed to blush. 'You noticed his coarse jokes to-day about the ambuscades.' And Guskov, in spite of my repeated efforts to stop the conversation, began to justify himself to me, and to demonstrate that he did not run away from the ambuscades, and that he was not a coward, as the Adjutant and Captain S. wished to imply.

'As I told you,' he said, wiping his hands on his sheepskin, 'people of that kind can't be considerate to a man who is a private and who has but little money : that is above their strength. And these last five months, during which it has somehow happened that I have received nothing from my sister, I have noticed how they have changed towards me. This sheepskin I bought of a soldier, and which is so worn that there is no warmth in it' (here he showed me the bare skirt of the coat), 'does not inspire him with sympathy or respect for my misfortunes, but only contempt which he is unable to conceal. However great my need, as, for instance, at the present time, when I have nothing to eat except the soldiers' buckwheat, and nothing to wear,' he continued, seemingly abashed, and pouring out for himself yet another cup of vodka, 'he does not think of offering to lend me any money, although he knows that I should certainly repay him, but he waits that I, in my position, should ask him for it. You understand what it would mean for me to have to go to him. Now, to you,

for instance, I could say quite straight : *Vous êtes au-dessus de cela, mon cher, je n'ai pas le sou.*¹ And do you know,' said he, looking desperately into my eyes, ' I tell you straight, I am now in terrible difficulties ; *Pouvez-vous me prêter dix roubles argent ?*² My sister must send me something by the next mail, *et mon père . . .*'

' Oh, with pleasure,' said I, though, on the contrary, it was painful and vexatious, especially because, having lost at cards the day before, I myself had only a little over five rubles, and they were in Nikita's possession. ' Directly,' I said, rising, ' I will go and get them from the tent.'

' No, it will do later, *ne vous dérangez pas.*³

But without listening to him, I crept into the closed tent where my bed stood, and where the captain lay asleep.

' Alexey Ivanich, please lend me ten rubles till our allowances are paid,' said I to the captain, shaking him.

' What ! cleared out again ? And it's only yesterday you resolved not to play any more ! ' said the captain, still half-asleep.

' No, I have not been playing ! But I want it —please lend it me.'

' Makatyuk ! ' shouted the captain to his orderly, ' get me the money-box and bring it here.'

' Hush, not so loud,' I said, listening to Guskov's measured footsteps outside the tent.

' What ! . . . Why not so loud ? '

' Oh, that fellow in the ranks asked me for a loan. He's just outside.'

¹ You are above that [i. e. above despising me for my misfortunes], my dear, I have not a halfpenny.

² Can you lend me ten rubles ?

³ Do not trouble yourself.

'If I had known that, I would not have given it you,' remarked the captain. 'I have heard about him, he's the dirtiest young scamp.'

Still the captain let me have the money all the same, ordered the money-box to be put away and the tent properly closed, and again repeating, 'If I had known what it was for, I would not have given it you,' he wrapped himself, head and all, in his blanket. 'Remember you owe me thirty-two now!' he shouted after me.

When I came out of the tent Guskov was pacing up and down in front of the little seats, his short bandy-legged figure in the ugly cap with the long white wool, disappearing in the darkness and reappearing as he passed in and out of the candle-light. He pretended not to notice me. I gave him the paper-money. He said '*Merci!*' and crumpling it up he put it in his trousers-pocket.

'I suppose play is in full swing at Paul Dmitrich's now!' he then began.

'Yes, I suppose so.'

'He plays so queerly, always *à rebours*,¹ and does not hedge. When you have luck it is all right, but then, when it goes against you, you may lose terribly. He is a proof of it. On this expedition he has lost more than fifteen hundred rubles, counting the things he has lost. And with what self-control he used to play formerly! So that that officer of yours seemed even to doubt his honour.'

'Oh, he did not mean anything. . . . Nikita, have we any Caucasian wine left?' I asked, very much relieved by Guskov's loquacity. Nikita grumbled again, but brought us the wine all the same, and again crossly watched Guskov emptying his cup.

¹ Reversing.

In Guskov's manner the former nonchalance again became apparent. I wished him to go away, and thought he stopped only because he did not like to go immediately after receiving the money. I was silent.

'How could you, with means at your disposal and no necessity, *de gaieté de cœur*¹ make up your mind to come and serve in the Caucasus? That is what I don't understand,' he said.

I tried to justify myself for this step that seemed to him so strange.

'I can imagine how uncongenial to you also the society of these officers must be, men without an idea of education. It is impossible for you and them to understand one another. Why, you may live here for ten years, and except cards and wine, and talk about rewards and campaigns, you will see nothing and hear nothing.'

I did not like his being so certain that I shared his opinion, and I assured him with perfect sincerity that I was very fond of cards and wine, and of talks about campaigns, and that I did not wish for better comrades than those I had. But he would not believe me.

'Oh, you do not really mean it,' he continued; 'and the absence of women—I mean *femmes comme il faut*²—is not that a terrible privation? I don't know what I wouldn't give to transport myself into a drawing-room now, and take a peep, though but through a crack, at a charming woman.'

He was silent a moment and drank another cup of wine.

'Oh God, oh God! It is still possible we may

¹ From light-heartedness.

² Genteel women.

some day meet again in Petersburg among men, live with human beings, with women.'

He emptied the bottle and said: 'Oh, *pardon*, perhaps you would have taken some more, I am so terribly absent-minded. And I'm afraid I have drunk too much, *et je n'ai pas la tête forte*.¹ There was a time when I lived on the Morskaya² *au rez-de-chaussée*.³ I had a delightful little flat and furniture—you know I had a knack for arranging things elegantly and not too expensively. It is true *mon père* gave me the crockery, and plants, and excellent silver plate. *Le matin je sortais*,⁴ then calls, at five o'clock *regulièrement* I went to dine with her, and often found her alone. *Il faut avouer que c'était une femme ravissante*!⁵ Did you not know her? Not at all?'

'No.'

'You know, there was so much of that womanliness about her, that tenderness, and then such love!... Oh God! I did not know how to value my happiness then.... Or when we returned from the theatre and had supper together. It was never dull in her company, *toujours gaie, toujours aimante*.⁶ Yes, I did not then foresee how rare a joy it was. *Et j'ai beaucoup à me reprocher*⁷ in regard to her. *Je l'ai fait souffrir, et souvent*⁸—I was cruel. Oh, what a delightful time it was! But I am wearying you.'

¹ And I have not a strong head.

² Morskaya—one of the best streets in Petersburg.

³ On the ground floor.

⁴ In the morning I went out.

⁵ It must be admitted that she was a ravishing woman.

⁶ Always gay, always loving.

⁷ And I have much to reproach myself with.

⁸ I have made her suffer, often.

‘No, not at all.’

‘Then I will tell you about our evenings. I used to enter—oh, that staircase, I knew every plant-pot on it—the very door-handle—all was so nice, so familiar to me—then the ante-room, and then her room. . . . No, it will never, never, return ! She writes to me even now ; I can, if you like, even show you her letters. But I am no longer what I was—I am ruined, I am no longer worthy of her. . . . Yes, I am completely ruined ! *Je suis cassé.*¹ I have neither energy nor pride ; nothing, not even nobility . . . Yes, I am ruined ! and no one will ever understand what I have suffered. Every one is indifferent. I am a lost man ! I can never rise again, because I have sunk morally . . . sunk into the mire . . . sunk. . . .’ And a real, deep despair sounded in his voice at that moment ; he did not look at me, but sat motionless.

‘Why give way to such despair ?’ I said.

‘Because I am vile ; this life has destroyed me ; all that was in me has perished. I no longer suffer proudly, but basely ; I have no *dignité dans le malheur.*² I am insulted every moment, and I bear it all, and go to meet insults half-way. The mud *a déteint sur moi.*³ I have become coarse myself, have forgotten what I knew, I can’t even speak French now, and I feel that I am base and desppicable. I can’t fight in these surroundings ; it is impossible ! I might perhaps have been a hero : give me a regiment, gold epaulets, and trumpeters ; but to march side by side with some uncivilized Antonov Bondarenko or other, and to

¹ I am broken.

² Dignity in misfortune.

³ Has stained me.

think there is no difference between him and me, it is all the same whether I get killed or he does—that is the thought that is killing me. You understand how terrible it is that some ragamuffin may kill me—a man who thinks and feels, and that he might as well kill Antonov by my side, a creature indistinguishable from a brute ; and it is quite likely to happen that it is I who will be killed and not Antonov—it is always so, *une fatalité* for all that is lofty or good. I know they call me a coward. Granted that I am a coward. It is true I am a coward and cannot help it ; but it is not enough that I am a coward, according to them I am also a beggar and a contemptible fellow. There, I have just begged money from you, and you have a right to despise me. No, take back your money,' and he held out to me the crumpled note ; 'I want you to respect me.' He covered his face with his hands and began to cry, and I did not in the least know what to say or do.

'Don't go on like that,' said I ; 'you are too sensitive ; you should not take things so much to heart : don't analyse but look at things simply. You say yourself that you are a man of character ; face your task, you have not much longer to suffer,' I said to him very incoherently, for I was excited both by feelings of pity and by a feeling of repentance at having allowed myself to condemn a man who was truly and deeply suffering.

'Yes,' he began ; 'had I but once, since I came into this hell, heard a single word of advice, sympathy, or friendship—a single human word such as I hear from you—I might have borne everything calmly, have faced my task, and even behaved as a soldier ; but now it is terrible.

... When I reason sanely, I long for death. Why should I care for a life of dishonour, or for myself, who am dead to all that is good in life ? But at the least sign of danger I can't help craving for this vile life, and guarding it as if it were something very precious, and I can't, *je ne puis pas*,¹ master myself. . . . That is, I can,' he continued, after a moment's pause ; ' but it costs me too great an effort, a tremendous effort, when I am alone. When others are present, and in ordinary circumstances when going into action, I am brave enough—*j'ai fait mes preuves*,²—because I have self-love and am proud—that is my fault—and in the presence of others . . . I say, let me spend the night with you ; they'll be playing all night in our tent. I can sleep anywhere—on the ground.'

While Nikita was making up a bed we rose, and again, in the dark, began walking up and down the battery. Guskov must really have had a very weak head, for after only two cups of vodka and two glasses of wine he was unsteady on his feet. When we had walked away from the candle I noticed that he put the ten-ruble note, which he had held in his hand all through the foregoing conversation, back into his pocket, trying not to let me see it. He continued to say that he felt he might yet rise if he had a man like myself to take an interest in him.

We were about to enter the tent to go to bed when suddenly a cannon-ball whistled over us and struck into the ground not far off. It was very strange : the quiet, sleeping camp, our conversation—and suddenly the enemy's ball flying, God knows whence, right in among our tents :

¹ I cannot.

² I have shown it.

so strange that it was some time before I could realize what had happened. But one of our soldiers, Andreyev, who was pacing up and down the battery on guard, came towards me.

‘He’s sneaked within range. There’s the place he fired from,’ remarked he.

‘The captain must be roused,’ said I, and glanced at Guskov.

He had crouched nearly to the earth and stammered, trying to say something, ‘This . . . this . . . is unple . . . this is . . . most . . . absurd.’ He said no more, and I did not see how and where he suddenly vanished.

In the captain’s tent a candle was lit, and we heard him coughing, as he always did on waking; but he soon appeared, demanding the linstock to light his little pipe with.

‘What’s the matter, old man?’ said he, smiling. ‘It seems I am to have no sleep to-night; first you come with your “fellow from the ranks”, and now it’s Shamyl. What are we going to do? Shall we reply or not? Nothing was mentioned about it in the orders?’

‘Nothing at all. There he is again,’ said I; ‘and this time with two guns.’

And, in fact, before us, a little to the right, two fires were seen in the darkness like a pair of eyes, and then a ball flew past, as well as an empty shell—probably one of our own returned to us—which gave a loud and shrill whistle. The soldiers crept out of the neighbouring tents, and could be heard clearing their throats, stretching themselves, and talking.

‘Hear him a-whistlin through the fuse-hole just like a nightingale!’ remarked an artilleryman.

‘Call Nikita !’ said the captain, with his usual kindly banter. ‘Nikita, don’t go hiding yourself ; come and listen to the mountain nightingales.’

‘Why not, y’r honour ?’ said Nikita, as he came up and stood by the captain. ‘I have seen them nightingales and am not afraid of ’em ; but there’s that guest who was here a moment ago drinking your wine, he cut his sticks soon enough when he heard ’em ; went past our tent like a ball, doubled up like some animal.’

‘Well, some one must ride over to the Chief of Artillery,’ said the captain to me in a grave and authoritative tone, ‘to ask whether we are to reply to the shots or not. We can’t hit anything, but we can shoot for all that. Be so good as to go and ask. Order a horse to be saddled, you’ll get there quicker ; take Polkan, if you like.’

Five minutes later the horse was brought, and I started to find the Chief of Artillery.

‘Mind, the watchword is *pole*,’ whispered the careful captain, ‘or you’ll not be allowed to pass the cordon.’

It was barely half a mile to where the Chief of Artillery was stationed. The whole way lay among tents. As soon as I had left the light of our own watch-fires behind, it was so dark that I could not even see my horse’s ears—only the watch-fires, which now seemed very near, now very far away, flickered before my eyes. Having given the horse the rein and let him take his own course for a little, I began to distinguish the white, four-cornered tents and then the black ruts of the road. Half-an-hour later, after having asked my way some three or four times, twice stumbled over tent-pegs and been sworn at each

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time from within the tent, and after having been twice stopped by sentries, I reached the Chief of Artillery at last.

While on my way I heard two more shots fired at our camp, but they did not reach the place where the staff was stationed. The Chief of Artillery ordered not to fire, especially now that the enemy had ceased firing ; so I returned, leading my horse and making my way on foot among the infantry tents. More than once, while passing a soldiers' tent in which I saw a light, I slackened my pace to listen to a tale told by some wag, or to a book read out by some 'literate' person, to whom a whole division listened, tightly packed inside and crowding outside the tent, and now and then interrupting the reader with their remarks ; or I caught merely some scrap of conversation about an expedition, about home, or about the officers.

Passing one of the tents of the 3rd Battalion, I heard Guskov's loud voice speaking very merrily and confidently. He was answered by young voices, not of privates but of gentlemen, as merry as his own. This was evidently a cadet's or sergeant-major's tent. I stopped.

'I have long known him,' Guskov was saying. 'When I was in Petersburg he often came to see me, and I visited him. He belonged to very good society.'

'Whom are you talking about ?' asked a tipsy voice.

'About the prince,' answered Guskov. 'We are related, you know ; more than that, we are old friends. You know, gentlemen, it is a good thing to have such an acquaintance. He is awfully

rich, you see. A hundred rubles is nothing to him ; so I've taken a little of him till my sister sends me some.'

' Well, then send . . . '

' All right ! . . . Savelich, old boy ! ' came Guskov's voice from the tent as he drew near to the entrance ; ' here are ten rubles, go to the canteen and get two bottles of Kahetinsky. . . . What else, gentlemen ? Speak up ! ' and Guskov, bare-headed and with hair dishevelled, reeled out of the tent. Throwing open his sheepskin and thrusting his hands into the pockets of his greyish trousers, he stopped at the entrance. Though he was in the light and I in the dark, I trembled with fear lest he should see me, and moved on, trying not to make a noise.

' Who 's there ? ' shouted Guskov at me in a perfectly tipsy voice. The cold air evidently had an effect on him. ' What devil is prowling about there with a horse ? '

I did not reply, and silently found my way out on to the road.

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